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The Fur Brigade
Mackinaw to Lake Superior

Sandy MacDonald's Man

A Tale of the Mackinaw Fur Trade

by R. Clyde Ford

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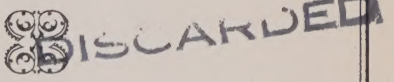

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By R. CLYDE FORD

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TO RICHARD

who remembers the flowers and forests, the trails and the camps *à la belle étoile* of the Great Lakes Country.

—A Lawyer.

"This is a remarkably good book. Good because it is interesting. Good because it is so scholarly, so well-based in the facts it covers—Michigan is fortunate in having a writer who has not merely skill to tell, but patient love enough of his subject matter to study it year after year till he knows it in reality".

Preface

THE story of this book tells of a period long ago, so long ago, indeed, that it seems like a narrative of another age. And it was another and different age in every important respect. Mackinaw is still a picturesque village on the Great Water, but the fur traders have gone, and with them the brigades, the Indians, the boatmen, and the forest runners. Gone, too, are the great forests; and the long carry of the On-to-nog-on is now crossed here and there by automobile routes and railroads.

There was nothing connected with the development of the Northwest which was more romantic and thrilling than the rise and fall of the fur trade. From the time when the early French explorers came into the interior of the continent by the way of the waterways of the Great Lakes country to the time the last fur trader had vanished from Mackinaw and the Great Lakes, it was a long succession of adventures, hardships, daring, and enterprise. Sometimes the trade was honest barter in the wilderness; frequently, however, it was thinly disguised fraud, for the rum,

cheap guns, and tinsel ornaments were no real equivalent of the furs obtained. And the Indians were the victims, not only of dishonesty, but also of the disease and demoralization which came as a result of the white man's invasion of the Indian country.

Not the least interesting of the various aspects of the fur industry was the way it was exploited by great organized companies in command of capital and men. We think first of the Hudson Bay Company of the far North which, however, hardly touched the edges of our wilderness of the Great Lakes. But it was different with the Northwestern Fur Company. Here was a great organization, powerful in the Great Lakes region, which also competed for a time with the Hudson Bay Company in its own territory, and at last combined with it. When it withdrew from the field which it had fought so hard to occupy and control, its place was taken by the American Fur Company, founded by John Jacob Astor. It is in the time of this latter company's control of the fur trade around Lake Superior that we have located our story.

Mackinaw was the headquarters of the American Fur Company on the Lakes. The picturesque little village with its old white fort topping the

cliffs behind it, for a whole generation at least, saw more furs moved in and out of its warehouses than any other place in the world. Life there was gay and boisterous in the summer months when the brigades were arriving from every corner of the wilderness, and staying until it was time to set forth again for the winter posts. As one visits the island now, and walks the streets of the village crowded with summer visitors, one ought to remember there was a time when a similar bustle and life there were dependent on furs, and on furs alone. Mackinaw was the center of a world-wide industry a hundred years ago.

The operation of the American Fur Company was often unscrupulous, and always vigorous and determined. Its rule was absolute, and the "Free Traders," as those were called who dared to engage in ventures of their own, were crushed by means which were frequently cruel and merciless. Any man who was bold enough to outfit brigades of his own and try for a portion of the rich harvests of the fur country was regarded as a trespasser and in the way. His posts were burned, his factors scared out or killed, his canoes plundered and destroyed. Now and then some brave individual did take up the gage of battle and defy the power of the Company. If he survived,

his biography made interesting reading. This story will, we hope, be proof of it. At any rate, as a narrative of what happened in that famous struggle of clashing interests, it will be of value.

One last word. This story, such as it is, comes from long and pleasant study of much history dealing with the old Mackinaw trade. But there is more than study in it—the author has pictured and re-created much of it in tramping the trails, fishing the streams, and sleeping by the campfires in the region south of Lake Superior which stretches between Mackinaw and the Wisconsin country. The facts and descriptions are exact, the Indians, we are convinced, are real. If the story has any merit in it, it is because it is a labor of love as well as of research, and projected back into a time which was romantic in itself without the aid of rhetoric.

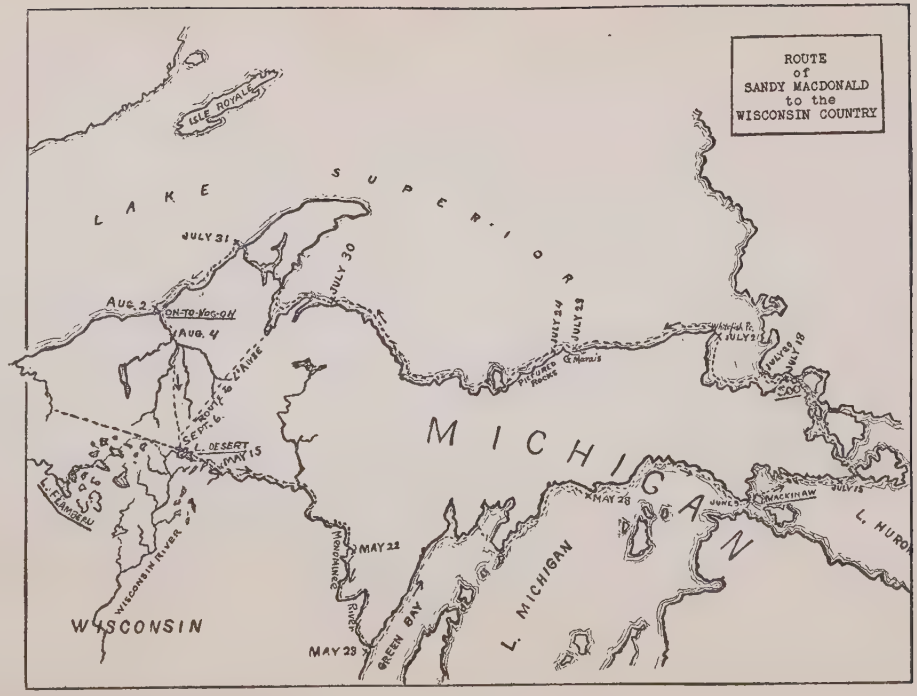
As a faithful account of an episode of the fur trade, the story necessarily contains a certain number of expressions and phrases which were a part of the regular speech of that great business. Some of these terms are French, some old-fashioned English, many of them are of Indian use and origin. Such of these as are not self-explanatory in the text itself will be found listed in a special glossary at the end of the book. We

believe a study of this vocabulary will add much to the interest of the reader and add also to that flavor of the wilderness which we hope is evident in the narrative itself.

It is only proper in this connection that we express our special obligation to the various friends, and strangers, too, who have given us much kindly assistance. Especial thanks are due to the great Brotherhood of the Out-of-Doors.

R. CLYDE FORD

Michigan State Normal College
Ypsilanti, September, 1928


ROUTE
of
SANDY MACDONALD
to the
WISCONSIN COUNTRY
ISLE ROYALE
LAKE SUPERIOR
JULY 31
JULY 30
JULY 24
JULY 23
JULY 21
JULY 19
JULY 18
Aug. 2
ON-TO-NEE-GON
Aug. 4
L'ANSE
SEPT. 6
SEPT. 5
L. DESERT
MAY 15
MICHIGAN
MAY 28
JUNE 1
MACKINAW
JULY 15
L. HURON
MAY 22
MENOMINEE RIVER
GREEN BAY
L. MICHIGAN
MAY 29
WISCONSIN
WISCONSIN RIVER

Sandy MacDonald's Man

A Tale *of the* Mackinaw Fur Trade

Chapter One

I AM an old man, but I remember as if it were yesterday the day when my uncle Sandy MacDonald called me into his private office behind the public store and warehouse.

"James, you have been helping me here with the post trading for more than a year now, and I see in you the making of a great Indian trader, one who will do credit to me and the family."

Uncle paused, and I made no reply. In fact, I was quite taken aback, for Sandy MacDonald was not a man to indulge in compliment and praise. He was as saving in speech as in character.

"I have no son of my own, and it is a great sorrow to me, but I believe you can help me to realize my hopes. I have never told you much of my ambitions. One sort o' goes to seed here in this lonesome country and keeps his dreams to himself. But I have had dreams, nevertheless,

and you figure in them. I want the day to come when a MacDonald canoe will bring trade to every Indian village in the wilderness. And when I am dead and gone I want to leave a trading business that will ask no odds of the American Fur Company, nor of any other such cutthroat gang."

"You are pretty well known, Uncle, as a successful 'opposition' trader, and the Company doesn't love you now overmuch."

"That's the point, me boy, that's the point. The Company has done its best to cripple me and kill my trade. It has burned my posts, plundered my *caches,* bribed my clerks, and murdered my factors. For years I've bucked that outfit from Mackinaw to Leech Lake and back, and I'm going to keep it up as long as birch trees can grow bark for canoes, and money get men. But now I'm thinking of the future, when I'll have to quit. In the old days they made kings out of the MacDonalds, and now and then somebody here calls me 'Sandy MacDonald, King of the Free Traders.' If that is so, I've a right to pick my successor. James, you shall inherit the land after me."

He laughed long and loud, as he blew a whirl of smoke up into the heavy beams of the ceiling. But there were tears in his eyes.

"Hurrah for the king," I said, "and for the king's heir! Only it will be hard sittin' on Sandy MacDonald's throne. Can I stick, Uncle?"

"You're a real MacDonald, and you can stick."

There was another long pause, unbroken and full of smoke. Finally Uncle went on.

"Now listen to my plan. As I said, I've watched you for a year, and I can see that you have a head for business like a man. I've never seen anyone who was better with accounts or stores. But it is time to broaden your education. You must drop inside work, now, for the outside, —for the canoe, the portage, the Indian lodge, and the fur trail. James, I'm a-goin' to send you into the wilds for awhile so you can learn the things you ought to know. In a way you are fitted for the trip. Already you speak Chippewa like a savage. This last experience will make a real trader out of you."

"Hup, hup!! Hup, hup!!" I shouted, and began a poor imitation of a war dance, shuffling my moccasined feet as best I could over the rude plank floor.

"Don't think it is going to be a pleasure trip. I'm not sending you off to grow soft in some distant post, not if I know myself. Go and pack up; tomorrow the brigade leaves for Fond du Lac."

I went out of that back room like one in a dream —it was a dream, a long cherished dream come true. Ever since I had sat on a stool in Sandy MacDonald's store and read and studied the accounts and reports from traders and trappers, I had longed to get away into the wilderness and have adventures of my own. And then, when the brigades came back and the store was crowded with forest runners, Indians, and clerks, and I heard at first hand all over again what I had gleaned out of the letters and reports, only the wonders increased a little by the telling, I was more impatient than ever to get away. Of course I whooped for joy when Uncle Sandy said, "I'm a-goin' to send you into the wilds." That was the thing above everything else that I wanted.

I went out along the little lane of a street that edged the shore in front of Mackinaw, the village. But hardly a village now, rather a frontier metropolis, swarming with men from the ends of the fur-trading wilderness. Our own canoe brigade would leave on the morrow for Fond du Lac and the far West, and all the others would depart soon. And now, up and down the little street, tramped, and jostled, and caroused the men of the various outfits, celebrating a leisure that was soon to end; Company men, aristocra-

tic and haughty because of the lordly people that hired them; dissolute half-breeds and Indians, decked out with gaudy kerchiefs and scarfs; *voyageurs,* boisterous and quarrelsome; lean, sunburned trappers and free traders, wild-looking and unkempt. Here and there along the street were booths which offered for sale poor brandy and rum, the sort that has always figured so largely in the Indian trade. And in the open spaces between the cabins and tents noisy companies danced and howled to the weird boom of the Indian drum, or the weirder strains of some canoeman's fiddle. It was Old Mackinaw playing at holiday before the sleepy lonesomeness of winter.

I strolled through the gay throng, but none of the sights or sounds appealed to me. I went down by the shore where the canoes and *bateaux* were beached, and threw pebbles into the water. The lake was smooth and beautiful, and the village behind, and the white fort high up on the bluff in the distance, made a pretty picture. But I was anxious to exchange it all for the wilderness.

That night Uncle and I had another talk about the trip, and he outlined what he had in mind for me.

"I have arranged for you to accompany my

come known the day before brought a number of traders' men down to our dock to see us depart. In the crowd were several American Fur Company's employees who looked us over critically and made comments about us which were not very agreeable to listen to. But Uncle Sandy who was busy saying good-by and giving farewell instructions did not appear to hear the gibes and insults, and I was quite astonished that our crews did no more than laugh and retort in kind.

The canoe that I had charge of was the last to push off.

"Take care o' yourself, boy," said Uncle, wading out into the water to shove us off.

"The old dog is worryin' about the pup," remarked some man of the crowd, standing back a piece from the beach.

I don't know what there was in the speech that suddenly made me beside myself with rage, but I gave a mighty sweep with my paddle which swung the canoe broadside in the shallow water, and before my crew knew what I was about I leaped overboard and ashore. I snatched my hat off, spit upon it like any half-breed bully, then trampled it under my feet in the sand.

"Where is the man who said that? The pup is big enough to eat him head and heels."

The Fort and Village of Mackinaw
(About 1830, From an Old Engraving)

When the men of the brigade saw what I had done they came splashing ashore with their paddles in their hands. I had backing enough, it was plain.

"Men, never mind," said Uncle Sandy calmly; "the man who talks about the old dog and the pup—I know him well. He's a renegade and a thief, does dirty work for the cutthroat Company rather than serve with honest men. Boy," here he came up to me with his big fist held out, "boy, I'll say it again, you're a real MacDonald, and I'm proud o' ye this day. Good luck and good-by. And you, too, men. I'll add five dollars to your credit with me, every one, to pay you for gettin' your feet wet at the start."

He turned around and went back up the beach, while the men of the brigade yelled, "Hurrah for Sandy MacDonald, the Free Trader."

Does this sufficiently indicate the kind of men who made up our crew? Well, all I can say is that they were tough, wiry fellows used to hardship and danger, and to a man loyal to Sandy MacDonald and his interests. Such a voyage as we were now entering upon, and the beautiful weather, put them in their element, and they dipped their paddles with the regularity of clockwork, forty strokes to the minute, as they chanted

in a lively way an old song which their forefathers had brought with them from the shores of France:

Dans un chemin j'ai rencontré
Trois chevaliers très bien montés,
Deux à cheval, l'autre à pied,
O lari li o don.

Deux à cheval, l'autre à pied,
Deux à cheval, l'autre à pied,
Celui d'à pied m'a demandé,
O lari li o don.

Celui d'à pied m'a demandé,
Celui d'à pied m'a demandé
Où irons-nous ce soir coucher?
O lari li o don.

Où irons-nous ce soir coucher?
Où irons-nous ce soir coucher?
Chez nous, Monsieur, si vous voulez,
O lari li o don.

Chez nous, Monsieur, si vous voulez,
Chez nous, Monsieur, si vous voulez,
Vous trouverez un bon souper,
O lari li o don.

Vous trouverez un bon souper,
Vous trouverez un bon souper,
Et de bons lits pour vous coucher,
O lari li o don.

Upon the road I met one day
Three cavaliers all feeling gay,
Two were on horse, the other nay,
O lari li o don.

Two were on horse, the other nay,
Two were on horse, the other nay,
The one on foot to me did say,
O lari li o don.

The one on foot to me did say,
The one on foot to me did say,
Where shall we sleep at close of day?
O lari li o don.

Where shall we sleep at close of day?
Where shall we sleep at close of day?
Right here, Fair Sir, in sooth you may,
O lari li o don.

Right here, Fair Sir, in sooth you may,
Right here, Fair Sir, in sooth you may,
Behold a supper on the way,
O lari li o don.

Behold a supper on the way,
Behold a supper on the way,
And some good beds without delay,
O lari li o don.

This was the way we paddled so gaily away from Mackinaw that morning in July.

Chapter Two

WE SKIRTED the shore to the east of Mackinaw and headed away for the mainland in the direction of the Cheneaux Islands, in a little bay of which we beached the canoes for dinner. Distinctions of rank began to show themselves at once. Mr. Kay, Cadotte and I, with the steersman from each of the canoes, made up one group who ate together, the rest of the men another. This separation, which was regarded by everyone as a perfectly natural one, was strictly in agreement with brigade traditions. Fires were kindled on the beach, water was dipped from the lake and hung to boil, and lyed corn, or hominy, and tallow were served out to the paddlers who cooked the two together in a kettle. Our own fare was a little better; we had salt pork and hard bread with our corn, and later on in the trip we frequently varied the pork with corned beef.

It was surprising the amount of work canoemen could do on fare which now seems so utterly impossible, but the fact remains that lyed corn and tallow made a most nourishing and

satisfying ration. A *voyageur* bending over his paddle ten or twelve hours at a stretch, or packing like a beast of burden one hundred eighty pounds all day long over some rocky portage, actually took on flesh. And then, it made a food supply easily transportable.

Its preparation was extremely simple. Good, clean, shelled corn was boiled thoroughly in strong lye, and then mashed and dried. In this condition it resembled pounded rice as much as anything, and could be carried handily in bags like so much grain. Each man was allowed a quart a day and one or two ounces of prepared fat, usually beef tallow; but in a pinch, salt pork, beaver fat, or bear's grease was substituted. A bushel of this corn and two pounds of fat were reckoned one man's supply for a month.

Our first night camp was pitched near St. Vital Point to the west of Point[1] Detour, the entrance from Lake Huron to St. Mary's River and Lake Superior.

[1] Exactness in the spelling of "Point" in the geography of the Great Lakes has been lost. The word in most of the names is actually the French *pointe,* and the spelling should be Pointe Detour, Pointe aux Pins, etc., but from analogy with the English, the form *point* is all but universal now.

We reached the Sault, the "Soo" our men called it, about noon on the eighteenth and were a good two days in getting by the place. There was so much liquor obtainable, and so many old friends bobbed up for our men to meet, that it was not until the afternoon of the twentieth that we had our stuff safely above the rapids and ready for the long traverse of Lake Superior. Even then we were not quite ready it seemed, for a careful counting of noses showed two of our most valiant paddlers missing. Pierre Cadotte and a stalwart assistant were sent back to hunt up the laggards, who were finally found on the village water front trying to bet their year's wages they could whip any two Company men in the place. It was only with great difficulty that they were induced to return to the more quiet ways of peace.

It was almost too late in the day to get under way, but Mr. Kay was anxious to remove the men from the distractions of the settlement, and so we pushed on to Point aux Pins, on the north shore of the opening into Whitefish Bay. The sun was just setting as we brought our little fleet into the quiet cove back of the point. For some reason or other the *voyageurs* and brigade people always regarded this place as the real beginning

The Soo

(As Painted by George Catlin from the Canadian Side About 1835)

of the crossing of Lake Superior and expected an allowance of flour and pork on which to make the voyage. Accordingly, as soon as camp was pitched, Mr. Kay apportioned to each of the men fifty pounds of flour and twenty-five pounds of pork which were charged to them, however, at wilderness prices, pork twenty-five cents, flour twelve and a half cents a pound.

From Point aux Pins we coasted on to Iroquois Point where we crossed to Whitefish on the south shore. This traverse is a dangerous one, but we made it safely and nightfall found us in camp on the open, sandy beach of Lake Superior. We had hardly got under way the next morning before a heavy blow from the lake suddenly came up and forced us to land again, an operation by no means easy. We did not dare beach the canoes broadside on, so we ran them in stern first, and while two men in each craft steadied the bows with poles the rest of us waded in and got out the freight. Before the task was done, the waves were rolling in high as our heads.

The next morning was clear and calm and we made good time. Night found us in the sheltered bay of the Grand Marais. Some Indians from a village near-by came down to our fire and traded us a fine lot of whitefish.

"Did you notice that lame old Indian?" Mr. Kay asked when the party had gone.

"Yes, he looked pretty well hacked up."

"He's known up and down the shore as Lame Leg, and is treated everywhere with great distinction by his tribesmen. He was a mighty warrior in his day."

That night by the campfire I got Lame Leg's story, the great adventure which brought him fame.

It seems that his clan, which had lived for ages here on the shore in this remote place, was so far away from the constant fighting between the Chippewas and the Sioux that it had almost forgotten the art of making war. The other Indians further west began to speak of the Grand Marais people as cowardly and said they did not care for anybody but themselves. At last such talk stung them into action. Some dozen of their young men went through a ceremony of fasting to prepare themselves; then they set out on the warpath to the Sioux country. They were inexperienced but determined, and sought some glorious exploit by which they could wipe out their shame. Lame Leg, though only a youth, accompanied the party, not as a warrior but as a runner, who should bring home the news of battle.

They travelled in their canoes almost to La Pointe, far west in Lake Superior, then ascended a river and portaged over into the Mississippi country and the land of the Sioux. Here in spite of all their caution they were attacked by a hostile war-party which far outnumbered them. They saw that their death was at hand, for they refused to flee and thus bring more shame to their tribe. They, therefore, called their runner, told him to take his station in some concealed place where he could watch the progress of the fight, then make his way home if he could and report their heroic end.

The combat was long and terrible, but at last every one of the brave men of Grand Marais had fallen. The boy messenger crawled away, but the bloodthirsty Sioux pursued him. For weeks he skulked like a lone wolf, hunted, starving, defiant. He sneaked from refuge to refuge, along rivers and through swamps, but all the time working his way toward Lake Superior. Months later, after terrible privations, he succeeded in reaching Grand Marais with his sad tale. Finally he himself became a war-chief and made a great name for himself in the wilderness country.

About the middle of the forenoon of the twenty-fourth, we came abreast of the Grand

Sable, as the *voyageurs* named the monstrous dunes which there rise boldly from the lake. A fine strip of beach began at this place, and to create a little diversion, Mr. Kay ordered out the *cordelles* or towing lines. A steersman only was left in each canoe to hold it off shore, and the men, seizing the lines, set off at a rapid walk along the strand. I climbed to the top of the dunes and had a magnificent view over a bare, billowy, sandy desert which seemed to stretch inland some distance. When I came to the border of the forest I was filled with amazement to see how the drifting sand was gradually engulfing the timber. Back from the edge a piece the withered tops of great trees protruded, then farther on were trunks only half buried, and lastly, at the very edge, trees with their bases drifted over, like giants mired to their knees.

Shortly after dinner we approached the Pictured Rocks. The shore line which had been mostly sand now gave way to rock, and kept constantly growing higher. A sudden squall compelled us to put in at Chapel Beach, a beautiful sandy opening in the rocky shoreline, possibly forty acres in extent. It is flanked on the eastern side by an arched rock with a curious mushroomed top, which everybody spoke of as the

Chapel. When I asked Johnny, my steersman, why this was, he merely laughed and shrugged his shoulders. Mr. Kay did not seem to have any explanation to offer, either, and likewise turned my questions off with a smile.

We rested for an hour or so under our tarpaulins, and then the rain subsided and the sun came out. It was time to move on again, and I crawled out and began to make preparations for reëmbarking. But nobody stirred. All the men had their heads together in some sort of a conference, and Mr. Kay was smoking complacently. Finally the men got up and arranged themselves in a line, looking as solemn as owls. I wondered what was up. Then Mr. Kay stepped forth very impressively and addressed me:

"Mr. MacDonald, we have reached in our traverse the sacred Chapel Rock, and it is the custom for every *mangeur de lard,* or bacon eater, to receive at this place the rite of baptism to signify that he is henceforth to be regarded as a real brigade man. The men have suggested that you should not be excused from this solemn ceremony."

I looked at him in some amazement. I knew that the term *mangeur de lard* was the common nickname among canoemen for one who was in-

experienced and green in wilderness life, but I had never heard of any such horse-play as this.

"It is a custom which the men will hate to neglect," he said, with dignity, whether affected or real, I could not make out.

"All right, I'll submit. Who will officiate?"

Pierre Cadotte stepped from the group, went and got a dish from our cooking outfit, then climbed down and dipped it in the lake. All the time the men were grinning, and I was feeling like a fool. Pierre came back, and somebody threw a piece of sailing-cloth over his shoulders to imitate a priest's surplice. He approached me with great seriousness and asked me to kneel. But I must confess I was beginning to show a little temper. In a sing-song voice he commenced to chant over me in French what I will venture to translate like this:

"Pork eater you come today,
And *voyageur* you go;
The old I wash away,
And lo, I do it so!"

At the last word he poured over me a gallon of water, more or less, and the men yelled like savages. Thinking now that the ceremony was complete, I rose and began to mop myself when Mr. Kay remarked:

Part of Pictured Rocks on Lake Superior

"The men expect a little gift of tobacco from you,—that is also the custom."

"We'll change the custom then," I said almost angrily, "the fool performance is at an end."

"Not yet," and he motioned to the men. Without a word they fell upon me before I could offer any resistance and silently carried me down the bank and into the lake. When the water was waist deep I heard Pierre say *"Maintenant,—* Now!" and suddenly under I went. They then released me and left me to crawl out unaided.

"This, too, is the custom," was all the comment Mr. Kay made, but he looked pleased when I broke out a carrot of tobacco from my own stores and divided it among those who had helped so generously in my christening.

For the next few days the voyaging was uneventful. We reached the Huron Islands on the thirtieth, and the next day, which was calm, we made the traverse to Portage River, the short-cut across Kee-wee-naw Point. We reached the river shortly after noon. From the coast of Lake Superior the route led up the river for some six miles, then across a long lake nearly as far. Off the northwestern corner of this inland sheet of water a long arm which is hardly more than a wet marsh extends back into the hills. For the

last mile we dragged and pushed the canoes through mud and water. It was just getting dusk as we pulled up at the end of the portage which leads over the ridge to Superior again. We pitched camp at once and lost no time in getting into our blankets. As tired as I was, I could hardly sleep; in another day, two days at most, we should be at the On-to-nog-on, where Johnny and I were to leave the brigade on our own venture into the interior.

In the morning as soon as our breakfast was over, we began to pack the goods over the portage. The path was a good one, but for the first time I realized what a portage trail was like. Our seven tons of cargo made almost two hundred pieces, and back and forth we went from one *pose,* as the halting places were called, to another, moving the stuff over. It was back-breaking work, but play to what Johnny and I were to encounter later. When night came we were in camp on the western end of the trail, on the bluff which is here some forty feet above the big lake.

Mr. Kay routed us all out at daybreak to get an early start on the last fifteen leagues to On-to-nog-on. Fortunately the lake was as smooth as glass, and that day, which was August second, we paddled for fourteen hours. That

night we camped in sight of the low, sandy mouth of a river,—our river! We found a narrow entrance over a bar and piloted the canoes to a quiet landing in the still water of the cove within.

Chapter Three

THE next morning Mr. Kay and I walked up the river where Yellow Beaver had his camp. We arrived just in the nick of time, as it turned out, for we found the village in confusion, preparatory to moving into the interior to the berry country.

The chief received us cordially. When Mr. Kay told him I was a nephew of Sandy MacDonald, the old Indian was overjoyed. He took me by the hand and escorted me to his lodge.

"And how is my good friend, Tough Beast?" he asked.

"Who is Tough Beast?" I said, turning to Mr. Kay.

He laughed. "That is your uncle Sandy, a pretty good name, too."

"Tough Beast is well," I answered, "and sends you his greetings. And he has not forgotten to include some gifts for you in the canoes."

Yellow Beaver smiled his gratitude.

"My good friend remembers his red brother. But he always does. Many a time he has driven hunger away from Yellow Beaver's wigwam."

We talked a while longer. A tame crow came flying in at the smoke hole and perched on my shoulder. And no less than six lean, sharp-eared, fox-like dogs came in and sniffed us over.

Finally Mr. Kay said: "Our young friend is going into the Wisconsin country and will want two of your men to help on the portages. Can he have them?"

"Low water—hard work."

"Hard work—good pay."

"How much?"

Mr. Kay and I were prepared for this question, for we had frequently talked over the problem of transportation inland.

"We will give you one bushel of corn and ten pounds of pork. Before the men start we will give their families the same; we will also advance the pay of the men in goods to the value of ten skins, or *plus,* each, and in addition, supply food for their return trip."

"Very well, I will furnish the men."

After a little more discussion the matter was settled in all its details and Yellow Beaver agreed to have the men report at our camp the next morning. We then returned to get my canoe-load ready.

All the stores were unloaded and rearranged

and the various bales, or pieces, set aside for our trip. They represented the usual assortment of goods for the inland trade,—hardware, blankets, a few guns, ammunition, cloth, trinkets, and miscellaneous articles. In addition, we were to take two pieces of flour, four bags of lyed corn, and other usual camp stores.

Yellow Beaver was true to his word and early the next morning put in an appearance with two Indians. They were sturdy-looking men, no longer young. One was known as Nah-ma, the Sturgeon, the other as Ta-ga-we-nin-ne, the Hunter. We handed over the promised goods and provisions to Yellow Beaver, and Johnny and I began to get things in shape for departure. Mr. Kay stood around and talked.

"It will be impossible for you to tell now how or where you will come out of the interior. If you think best to return this way, you may count on our brigade passing next spring about the end of May. But you may want to go back by some of the Wisconsin rivers and Green Bay; we have a couple of brigades returning that way about the same time. Make your plans to suit yourself and keep an eye peeled. You can depend on Johnny in any emergency."

About ten o'clock Mr. Kay and his two canoes

departed for La Pointe and Fond du Lac. We stood on the shore and waved them off, firing a couple of shots as a salute. Then we turned to our canoe which was loaded and ready, and headed up the river. Johnny kept his old post as steersman, the Sturgeon was in the bow, and the Hunter and I worked our paddles amidships. When we came opposite Yellow Beaver's village, he and a boy pushed off in a canoe and announced their purpose of accompanying us as far as the Copper Bowlder.

"How far is it?" I asked the Hunter.

"Several pipes."

"Is it really copper? How big is it?"

"Big? Big as—" the man looked up at the sky as if pondering deeply;—"big as two moose."

That night we reached the fork near which the bowlder was located. The long carry to the Wisconsin country began near-by, and we thought it worth while to take a look at the curiosity, whatever it was. With old Yellow Beaver in the lead, we turned off the main stream until we came opposite the rock. There we camped. The old chief must have thought we were boys sure enough from the feverish haste with which we begged him to show us the way to the big rock. He led us along the shore and then halfway up the bluff.

The path was plain,—it was evident many feet had trodden that trail before us. Yellow Beaver halted. Taking some tobacco from his pouch he threw a pinch of it to the north, to the south, to the east, to the west. We looked, but saw nothing remarkable. A large gray bowlder, half buried in the sloping edge of the bluff, was before us, but the copper—where was it?

"Where is the copper rock?" we asked, unable to restrain our impatience.

Yellow Beaver pointed majestically to the gray shape in the bank. We approached and walked around it. No one would have taken it at first sight for the famous Copper Bowlder, but as we examined it we saw the copper plain enough. It was mostly hidden by the rock, but protruded here and there in jagged, irregular corners and knobs. It was evident that human hands had worked away at it for ages; the rock was blackened in places by fire, and it was hewn and hacked and pounded on every side, as if all the tribes of the Northland had tried at some time or other to secure a bit of the precious metal.[1]

[1] The famous Copper Bowlder was transported at great pains to Washington in 1848, and now reposes in the Smithsonian Institution.

The Copper Boulder of Ontonagon As It Now Appears in the National Museum at Washington

That night Yellow Beaver grew talkative over a pipeful of Uncle Sandy's tobacco, and I had no great trouble to bring conversation around to the subject of the Copper Bowlder again. Finally he launched into the telling of a strange tale.

"The leaves have fallen from the birch trees fifty times at least since I first visited the Bowlder. I came after *mis-quah-beek,* copper, with a party from far inland, but when we arrived here we were not alone; we had been preceded by a party of Sioux who said they had come from beyond the Mi-chi See-pee, the Great River, to get copper for their arrows and trinkets."

Yellow Beaver stopped at this point and gazed into the fire. I was too well versed in Indian etiquette to disturb his reverie, and after a while he continued.

"We were greatly surprised to see any of our old enemies, the Sioux, here in the very center of the Chippewa country, and we suspected they were a scouting party which had put in here merely as a blind. For generations the region around the Copper Bowlder had been regarded as neutral ground, just like the land where the red pipe-stone is found, and for that reason the Sioux knew they were safe for the moment. So when our two parties met we saluted each other

peacefully enough. One of our old men knew a little of Sioux talk, and with his help the two chiefs held a parley. First they smoked the peace pipe and buried the hatchet. Both sides agreed to surrender their weapons to the chief, who should deposit them in a place sacred to the *man-i-tou* or spirit of the rock. Then the chief of the Sioux took off a necklace of shell, gave it to our leader and addressed us:

" 'My brothers, we have taken the liberty of approaching your hunting grounds, knowing well that Kit-chee Man-i-tou, the Great Spirit, has placed here this heap of copper for all his red children. We, therefore, ask permission to remain here for a few days till we have gathered enough metal to tip our arrows and make beads and baubles for our women. Then we shall withdraw to the other side of the great forest. *Wa-ah,* I have spoken.' "

"Then our chief replied:

" 'My brothers, we are well pleased with your words, and you need not fear us. Although this wealth of copper lies within our lands, we know it is the gift of the Great Spirit to all his children alike. Stay here as long as you wish, then depart and pass peaceably through our lands. May not the arrow tips you carry be used by your

young warriors to harm us or our women and children. I have spoken.' "

"For several days after this we worked together in peace, splitting off pieces of the raw metal and hammering them into strips. Then one night as we sat together around the campfire, one of the Sioux took an empty kettle, covered it with a piece of skin, and so made a drum out of it. Next, the Sioux chief took a pipe and filled it, and then he and his followers began to dance the calumet while the man beat the drum. As they danced they chanted their war deeds, not a few of which had been the killing of our women and children. When they had finished we Chippewas began; and we danced better than the Sioux, and our exploits surpassed theirs. I remember well how ardently I danced and sang, and how my foolish tongue twitted our ancient enemies of many defeats and cowardly deeds. The Sioux grew sullen and all good feeling was over. When the dance ended both parties withdrew to their camp, we triumphant and arrogant, the strangers ill-tempered and revengeful.

"The next morning we saw the Sioux breaking camp, and in a short time their chief approached our leader and announced that they would take the homeward trail. The two leaders went to the

sacred spot with offerings, then smoked the pipe of peace, blowing the smoke to the north, the south, the east, and the west. Then the Sioux shouldered their packs and took the path which led to the prairie country. We watched them depart in silence.

"After they had been gone a spell our best scout was sent forward on their trail. It was afternoon when he returned, and he reported how they had left the trail after trying clumsily to discover if they were being followed, and then had swung around to the river by which we had arrived. There they were waiting for us in ambush."

Yellow Beaver again relapsed into tantalizing silence which neither I nor the others by the fire ventured to break. Finally he said: "For many years I wore on my war bonnet a Sioux scalp."

The Indians grunted with satisfaction at these words. But the story was not yet finished.

"The Sioux knowing that we also planned to set out homeward, believed that we would break camp soon after their departure. Filled with rage they were now planning to fall upon us as we paddled up the river. Our chief warriors now counseled together and hit upon a crafty scheme. We hurriedly loaded our canoes and paddled up

the river a mile or so where we hid all of our stuff in the forest. By a long detour we then came back through the forest to a point which commanded the Sioux trail. We knew that when the Sioux warriors had waited a long time they would grow tired and send out a scout to see if we were still in camp. Not finding us there, they would naturally think we had got by them in some way, and then of course they would return to their own trail again.

"Our plan worked to perfection, and late the next day our runner brought back word that they were coming. We crouched there like so many panthers watching the runway of a deer. At last we heard them—those plains Indians made as much noise in the forest as a bear rushing to cover. Then they came into sight through the trees. Their packs were heavy and they stumbled along with their faces turned toward the earth. The Great Spirit had blinded their eyes that day. When they came opposite to us our leader gave the Chippewa war-whoop, then we mowed them down with arrows and bullets. Some fell in their tracks; others we tomahawked before they could seize their weapons. A few only escaped, and those we did not pursue. They would tell what had happened there in the Chippewa country."

What a strange creature the Indian was! Yellow Beaver in his old age, and half Christian as he was, lived over with savage zest this story of stealth and slaughter. Tribal hatreds die hard. That age-old hatred between the Chippewas and the Sioux still slumbered deep in his heart, and all it needed was some little reminder to wake it into fury.

Chapter Four

THE next morning Yellow Beaver and the boy left us at the fork of the On-to-nog-on, and Johnny and I turned our faces toward the interior. The drought of August had lowered the river until it was little more than a winding rivulet in a rocky, stony bed. We unloaded our canoe at the beginning of the carry, which alas! was destined to be a long one. But our enthusiasm was boundless, and what lay ahead of us had no terrors.

The portage trail was an old one and rose directly from the river, leading away over the bluffs and into the forest toward the southeast. Our two Indians were not much more accustomed than we were to such heavy work as confronted us, and we all needed a few days of preliminary labor before we could wear off the miles ahead of us to much advantage. I was fairly stocky for my years, and muscular, but Johnny was smaller, the type of the hardy, lithe French Canadian.

Our outfit, as we unloaded it, made thirty-six pieces, besides the gun, axe, cooking kit and tent, which we rolled into a bundle. Thirty-six times

eighty; twenty-nine hundred pounds—that was what we had to tote. And then there was the canoe. All in all, the load was enough to harden us up before the journey's end. Since I was now the *bourgeois* I took charge of operations. The canoe was not very heavy and in a fair trail one man could carry it. I told the Sturgeon to move it ahead one *pose*. He stepped up, rolled it over, and, getting under it with his head inside, balanced it over his shoulders on a cross beam and started off. I had made up my mind that one piece would be enough for any of us at the start, so made that the rule. Johnny knew his business; he picked up a bale, set it on a log, backed up to it, and then, with a handy toss, threw his tumpline over it, leaned forward with the wide part of the strap over his forehead, and off he went. Ta-ga-we-nin-ne did the same. It looked easy; I ached to get at it. I soon ached also to get away from it!

I hadn't let on any, but I was a novice at the portaging. On the carry over Kee-wee-naw point I had toted a few simple things which were not very heavy or bulky. I preferred to acquire my experience when Mr. Kay and fifteen men were not present. Now, I was ready to try my hand at it. I picked up a piece, put it on the log, as

the others had done, and managed to get it on my back. As I leaned forward it didn't seem so heavy. I grinned to myself; I could pack that all right. Eighty pounds, no heavier than that!

It was quite an effort getting to the top of the bluff, and the load seemed only too eager to sag down and drag my head back. And I soon learned that my neck could not stand any sideways pull. I leaned forward again, jolted the load up into the small of my back, and struck out at a brisk walk. For a few minutes I got along nicely. The path at first was smooth and there was no grade; then came trouble. The path dropped into a swampy ravine which was full of brush and roots, and I caught my toe on something and pitched headlong, and with such force that the eighty pounds of pack whopped over and battered my head into the mire. I was glad that the others were not spectators of my inglorious downfall. Someway I got loaded up and in movement again. No more accidents, but I wondered where the first *pose* was as I stumbled and slipped and panted along. That confounded Sturgeon with the canoe had trotted off a pretty long stretch I thought. At last I met the others coming back. Their loads were half a mile, probably, from where we started.

We shuttled back and forth nine times to transport our cargo to that first halting place, each of us nine miles to cover that first half mile! It was no wonder that we made but two *poses* that day, and went into camp late, at that. Johnny and I were too tired to sleep, and rolled and tossed about all night because of aches and pains and sore muscles. The Indians were tired too, but they said nothing; they merely wrapped up in their blankets with their feet to the fire and went to sleep.

I remember that first day on the long trail plainly; I remember the second day more plainly. We got out early and had our lyed corn and tallow and a kettle of tea. Then we went at the carrying. It was a beautiful morning, cool and fresh and dewy; the birds were making music in every tree, and the chipmunks were frisking about with saucy chirpings. One of the Indians seized the canoe and set off toward the first *pose* of the day, and the rest of us loaded up and followed.

"How do you feel, Johnny?" I asked as we slogged along.

"As if I was made of glass and might break in two," was his ready answer.

I had to laugh, for it described so accurately

my own feelings which I had not dared mention. Actually, it did not seem as if I could ever bring my sore and strained muscles into play again; my legs were stiff and wooden-like; my ribs had caved in; and my neck had subsided into my shoulders so that every jolting step I took made the sag of the load almost unendurable. Wow! this was the real thing.

Somehow Johnny and I made the *pose* without collapsing. Back and forth we went, and it grew a little easier; by noon we were at the second *pose* —a distance which it had taken us the whole of the day before to traverse. This cheered us a little. We had a good nooning and then made another long *pose* in the afternoon. We were now five *poses* on the way. As we sat by the fire that evening I said to Ta-ga-we-nin-ne, the Hunter:

"How many *poses* to the end of the portage?"

"When water is low, all portage," he answered laconically.

"Very well,—how many *poses* under the worst conditions?"

"Two hundred," he replied, and the Sturgeon said:

"Yes, two hundred."

"Well, Johnny, what do you say to that?"

"It is to laugh," he remarked in French, the language in which he expressed himself best, but I knew he didn't mean it.

The days passed and we got toughened to the work. From three *poses* we increased to six, and from one piece at a load to a piece and a half. Frequently, over a good trail, the Indians carried two pieces, a hundred and sixty pounds for a trip. By the end of the tenth day, August 14th, we had made thirty-six *poses*.

Our way followed hill and dale, but lay mostly in the river valley. Now and then we came out by the stream, or even crossed it as it wound around, but the bed was almost bare, so little water was coming down. And then one day the weather changed. We had noticed all the afternoon how a dense haze seemed to be settling over the sky, and how muggy it was getting. The air was so oppressive that we could hardly breathe as we stumbled along with our packs. When we made a *pose* late in the day the Sturgeon said solemnly:

"Big rain coming—there will soon be plenty of water in the On-to-nog-on."

"That wouldn't be so bad," I heard Johnny reply,—"we could at least track the canoe up a few miles and rest our backs."

"Rest our backs and hurt our feet," the Indian grunted.

By nightfall it was thundering, and lurid flashes of lightning were beginning to play in the western sky. We took special pains to put our camp in order. A tarpaulin was spread over our stuff, and a few special pieces were tucked out of the way under the tent. Big drops commenced to patter through the trees as we turned in, Johnny and I in the tent as usual, the two Indians this time under the canoe.

All night long it rained, and the next day, and the next—a steady downpour, and we stayed in camp.

"Plenty of water in the On-to-nog-on now," said the Hunter, and his companion added:

"So far we carry canoe; now canoe carry us," and he slapped his thigh in applause of his own joke.

It was dull squatting there under our small tent, and the black-flies, deer-flies, and mosquitoes came out of the bushes and preyed upon us. We kindled smudges, but this added only the torment of smoke to our misery.

Not far away the Sturgeon lay under the shelter of the overturned canoe. He grinned over at us as he saw us fighting the flies, and called out:

"The *man-e-to-anse-ug,* or little spirits, are on the wing to-day. Over here it is different," and he whopped over on his belly, propped his head in his two hands, and stared at the ground—"over here the white men are crossing the portage."

He was so absorbed in what he saw that I went over to look also. He pointed to a long line of ants, each carrying a white larva in its jaws and disappearing in the grass.

"See, each man has a pack of merchandise," he said.

I laughed and was about to scuttle back out of the rain when he added: "Maybe, if we watch them long enough they will turn into real men, as they did in the story."

I ducked under the bark roof by his side. "We could supply a few packs for such a procession," I said to keep him going. "How was it in the story?"

"I am no born story teller," he began almost bashfully, "but as I remember it was something like this: Long ages ago an Indian named Wa-beg-wuh-na, White Feather, lived with his squaw O-gen-e-ba-goo-guay, Wild Rose, in a wigwam by the edge of a forest. They were old and poor, for their sons had gone on the warpath and not come back, and their daughter had married into

another tribe. As long as summer lasted they had enough to eat, but when the leaves fell from the trees, and the snow came, and the waters froze, hunger appeared in the wigwam. Wa-beg-wuh-na tried to hunt near home, but he was feeble and the game only laughed and ran away from him. Until the ground became too hard his wife was able to dig *waub-es-se-pin,* arrow-root, and boil it for food. But when at last the winter began in earnest there was nothing left to eat but strips of 'twisted wood' which they stewed over the fire.

"It grew colder and colder; the wind now roared through the forest, and the drifting snow piled higher and higher. There was no more food, and no opportunity to get any. The old people had managed before the storm came to get a piece of a log into the lodge and on the fire, and now they sat hovering before it, waiting for the end. Wa-beg-wuh-na chanted his death song, and O-gen-e-ba-goo-guay gazed into the curling blaze. Suddenly, as she looked, a line of ants began to emerge from a hole in the log, probably driven out by the heat, and each one carried a white bundle in his mouth. She looked the harder and lo! it was not a procession of ants she saw—the fire, the wigwam, even Wa-beg-wuh-na, had

vanished, and she was standing on a little hill overlooking a portage. Before her toiled a party of white men with heavy packs on their backs, just as we have been doing for a week, and a kind-looking man in a long black gown led the way. When the Black Gown saw her he beckoned and said in her own tongue: 'How is it with thee? *Tah-neen keen-o-waw aiz-zhe-be-mah-te-ze-aik?*' "

" 'I am hungry, *Ne-buk-kud-da,* and my husband, *o-be-mah-tuh-se-win e-nug- gah- mo-toan,* he sings his death song.' "

"At this the procession halted, the men put down their loads and lighted their pipes, as if glad of a rest. Black Gown spoke to one of them who took a bag of corn and a piece of fried meat out of their supplies, and they followed O-gen-e-ba-goo-guay to her wigwam. Her husband still sat by the dying fire, but the ants with their burdens had disappeared. And soon hunger, too, had disappeared."

Such was the Sturgeon's tale.

In the third night the rain ceased as abruptly as it had begun, and when morning came the sky was clear and the sun once more gilded the tall pines on the ridges. While Johnny was getting breakfast the Sturgeon and I went across to

the river, which was not so very far away from the portage trail, to see what the prospect for canoe navigation was. We found the stream of a good size, flowing swift and muddy, with lots of driftwood coming down. The Indian pointed to the debris going by and said "Beaver dams!" And then he went on to tell me that a sudden flood like this always destroyed a certain number of such dams, which were swept away by the unusual pressure.

"Nah-ma, what do you think—can we make any progress up the river?"

"For one or two days, maybe more, we can pole and pull our way up. Then the water will go down and we shall be left stranded. But as long as it lasts it will be a relief and better than toting overland."

We hurried back, swallowed our lyed corn and grease, and then began to move our goods to the stream. The Indians looked the canoe over and patched one or two places that seemed shaky. I say *patched,* but that is not quite the word. Some gum, a mixture of beeswax and pitch, was spread in the cracked and leaky seams, and then melted and smeared down tight by one of them holding a smoking firebrand over it.

When Johnny and the Hunter saw the sweep-

ing current, they gave a yell of delight; water travel suited them. The canoe was soon loaded. Each man provided himself with a smooth stiff pole, and we pushed off, hugging the bank to avoid the worst of the current. From the beginning it was a struggle. Sometimes bowlders or log-jams impeded our progress, and the canoe had to be unloaded and all the outfit carried around the obstruction; and then came rapids, and two men would get out and wade and push, while the other two held the canoe against the on-rushing water with their poles. It was slow work, but progress nevertheless, and when noon came one of the Indians declared we had come two pipes at least.

In the afternoon the country changed a little, and the rapids grew less swift and difficult. In places the water was still deep and treacherous, and the utmost care was needed at the bends to keep from reaching with the poles for a bottom that did not seem to exist. I did that very thing once with disastrous results. I was standing in the stern of the canoe, pushing with might and main on a ledge, trying to shove up against a particularly bad cross current, when my pole suddenly slipped off into deep water and I followed it head first like a big frog. It was such a clean

Scene on the On-to-nog-on River

dive that I hardly left a ripple as I went under. I was swept down stream, bumping into brush and logs, but at last managed to catch hold and pull myself out some distance below. I was a bedraggled looking object, but we all were, for that matter, and I was not much wetter than the others who had been wading breast deep some of the time.

The next day we still kept to the river, though the water was falling rapidly, but in the afternoon we were put out of business for good. We were trying to work our way up into a bad log-jam when by some mishap we ripped a hole in the bow of the canoe and broke a couple of the cedar ribs which were fashioned with so much skill to give shape and strength to the craft. Before we would make a move we were nearly swamped and the whole cargo soaked. There was nothing to do but get ashore as best we could and go into camp. We found an open space among the pines and spread out our stuff on pole frames around a big fire. It was pretty hot work for August weather, but there was no help for it, we must dry out our packs. And the canoe needed repairs.

We remained in that camp by the river, "Camp Drowned Rat," Johnny called it, the rest of that day and the next. The Indians hewed out some

green cedar ribs to replace the broken ones and set a new piece of bark in the canoe. It galled us to be thus stopped in our progess, so close to the river too, when the water was falling fast. But the rest was grateful, and we made the most of it. In the pine barrens inland a short distance we picked quantities of blue berries, and Ta-ga-we-nin-ne, the Hunter, lived up to his heroic name by bringing in a fair-sized buck which he stalked in a swamp a few miles away.

Finally our packs were dried out; the canoe was as good as new; the weather was fine once more. We inspected the river. It was pretty low. Johnny and the Sturgeon went up the valley a couple of miles—the country was flat and the stream spread out over a gravelly bottom. It was all over with canoe transportation; we must go back to the old method and use shank's horses again.

Chapter Five

IT WAS the twentieth of August when we started once more on the long carry of the On-to-nog-on. In sixteen days we had covered a distance of sixty-five or seventy *poses,* —thirty-six overland, and as many probably by water in the two days of the freshet. We had yet more than a hundred to make, a disheartening prospect. But it was an ordinary experience; men had followed this route for a hundred years, and we should get through some way as others had before us.

As the days went by we grew stronger and more expert at the packing. The Indians always carried two pieces at a trip now, and Johnny and I often were able to do the same over a good trail. Six or eight *poses,*—such grew to be a regular day's work for us. It was monotonous, man-killing toil, and I frequently caught myself comparing my present labor with the softer duties in the Mackinaw store. "And ye'll stick," had said Uncle Sandy. Yes, I'd stick or die!

The month of August drew to an end and we were still carrying from *pose* to *pose,* and camp

to camp. One day we came upon a trail which entered the main overland trail from the east, and the Indians said it was the route to L'Anse,[1] and that we were not more than twenty miles now from Lac Vieux Désert, the beginning of the lake country of the Wisconsin. After our conference with Yellow Beaver at the mouth of the On-to-nog-on, Mr. Kay had led us to think that it might be advisable for us to winter at Lac Désert. We were glad to be getting near it.

It was perhaps a mile beyond the L'Anse trail that we met two Indians, the first human beings we had encountered on the trip. We were half way between *poses,* plodding along with our heads down when we were startled by their "Bo-shoo! bo-shoo!" Of course, we put down our packs, ready for a moment's forest gossip. Lac Vieux Désert? They had left it that very morning. Any Indians there? A whole village at their accustomed camping ground. Were we going there? Yes? Whose outfit were we? Ah, yes. Tough Beast—they knew him—at least had heard of his brigades. How far back was the boss of our party? When Ta-ga-we-nin-ne an-

[1] L'Anse was an Indian settlement on Lake Superior, from where a trail led into the Wisconsin country.

swered this last question by pointing to me, they laughed in a way that nettled me. It was plain that they took no stock in Sandy MacDonald's man! After a little more talk had passed between us, they went on.

We completed our carry to the *pose* where already half our stuff was dumped, and I was surprised to see the Sturgeon proceed to count the pieces in the heap.

"What are you doing that for?" I asked with some irritation.

"I want to see if any pieces are missing."

"How could they be missing?"

"Those two men—" and he jerked his thumb back down the path.

"Would they take our property?"

The Indian shrugged his shoulders with a noncommittal air.

"I know them well; they live on the shore of Lake Superior at L'Anse; their reputation is bad. I'd trust them about as far as I could throw a bear by the tail."

"Let's hurry back to our stuff at the last *pose*."

"They are as sly as a carcajou around an Indian's *cache*. We must be sly too."

We put our heads together to plan a little, and here Ta-ga-we-nin-ne, the Hunter, showed his

sagacity. I thought then he must have once been a mighty man on the warpath; later, I found it out for a certainty.

"This is what they'll be up to, provided they make up their minds to pilfer anything. If our stuff is pretty well jumbled together, they'll take one or two pieces and conceal it near by, then hide and watch to see if we discover the loss at once. If we do not, and load up and start again, they'll take their plunder and light out as fast as they can go for a pipe or so, *cache* it somewhere and lie low for a day till we have given up looking for it."

"Yes, that seems plausible," I said, "but I don't intend to let them get away with it so easily. I have an idea too. We'll go back and load up as if we suspected nothing, taking good care meanwhile to look the pile over. If we discover anything is gone, I'll put down my load after we get good and away, and make a circuit to cut them off. I can do it before they get to the L'Anse branch of the trail. I'm boss of the outfit, it's my business to watch it."

Ta-ga-we-nin-ne's eyes sparkled.

"Tough Beast himself would have done no better," was his flattering comment.

I picked up the rifle which lay under the canoe

where we had placed it on the first trip, and back we started at a trot. Some five minutes' walk before we reached our goods I slipped the gun in the bushes and put a twig across the path to mark the place. A little later we were back and loading up, talking and laughing about what appeared to be indifferent matters. But it was not by accident that we pulled the packs around a little, and I saw that one was gone, a heavy sack of corn intended for our winter supply.

When we came to where the gun was hidden I swung my load over onto the Sturgeon's broad back, then set out at a run on a wide detour through the forest. I knew the thieves would be in a hurry, but I believed they would try to make the L'Anse trail before *caching* the plunder, in the thought that it would be a couple of hours at least before we would realize our loss. One bale out of so many might not be noticed till the stuff was pretty well moved.

I ran for twenty minutes or more, then bent back and picked up the trail. I took a hurried look around, listened, and tried to examine the path. No, I did not believe they had passed. I lay down behind a log, which made a good breastwork, and waited. I was out of breath and a few moments of rest were needed to quiet my

nerves. Some time went by; I was beginning to think they had slipped by me when I heard them coming. The forest was fairly open there and I had a good view of them before they reached me. They had slung the heavy bag by bark thongs on a pole and were jogging along with a swinging step like two Chinese coolies carrying a box of tea. The sight made me laugh. When they were almost upon me I said with emphasis:

"*Me-gwaitch wi-ah-bah-me-non!* I am glad to see you!"

If the earth had opened suddenly at their very feet they would not have been more thunderstruck. They dropped their load and whirled around, not knowing where to look.

I arose from behind the log, at the same time covering them with the gun.

"I am Sandy MacDonald's *bourgeois* and don't intend to sell any of the stuff in my outfit at this price. You are two sneaking thieves who ought to be driven out of every wigwam from one end of the forest to the other."

The men said nothing, but they looked their feelings.

"Glower if you want to, but at the first suspicious move I'll put a bullet through you! Right about and tote the stuff back."

The men picked up their pole and we set off back down the trail, and all the time I commented on their squaw-like appearance and behavior. We reached the *pose* just as the others returned for the final trip.

"Ho there!" I yelled to them. "I've got a couple of recruits to carry the last packs over. Load 'em up!"

Our two Indians laughed, and Johnny uttered a war-whoop.

"They are two fine-looking squaws," he said at length. "You'd think we could sell them for servants somewhere."

The men took the tumplines and loaded the two culprits with about as much as they could stagger under, and so we went on to the *pose,* I following with the gun cocked.

"What's your opinion of Young Tough Beast now?" Ta-ga-we-nin-ne asked them as they plodded along, but got no reply. Whatever they thought, they kept their opinions to themselves.

When we reached the *pose* I allowed them to drop their loads on the pile. I had lost some of my fierceness, now that the thing had turned out so well, and was quite disposed to be nobler about it. I asked Johnny to make up a small pack of corn, tallow, and tobacco, to which I added a

few trinkets of no especial value, but yet dear to the Indian heart.

"Here, men," I said as graciously as I could, "it was a mean trick you tried to play on us, but a hungry belly hasn't any conscience. Take this food and fill up. And tonight by your campfire smoke some of Tough Beast's tobacco; it's a free gift. The other things are for your wives and children."

Johnny placed the bundles at their feet, and then we turned to our own camp preparations and paid no more attention to them. They seemed reluctant to go; I suspect they were ashamed. Finally they picked up their gifts and edged away. At the last moment, however, one turned back and came straight up to me and held out his hand.

"E-nin-ne ne-way-bo-maw, ke-tah-ko-be-nik o-naun,—I see a man before me; he ties me fast," he said mysteriously; "we may meet again." Then they both vanished into the forest.

That came the nearest to being a real adventure that we had on the trip through the forest. Six days more we slaved at our task, and then through the trees we caught sight of a shining sheet of water that stretched away to the south before us. The Indians approached us solemnly and pointed to the lake; *"Ka-ta-kit-te-kon,*—Lac

Scenes of Lac Vieux Désert

Désert. This is the end of the portage and our work is done."

That night we pitched camp in a leisurely way, for our hurry was at an end. The Sturgeon and I rigged up the tent and arranged our stock of goods under a tarpaulin; Johnny and the Hunter stripped off their worn and not very clean clothes and went like a couple of water spaniels into the lake, where they whooped and splashed and dived and played.

Whatever delicacies we had appeared that night for supper, and then with the breeze from the lake blowing the mosquitoes away, we sat around in the warm evening and wondered about what our next move would be. The two Indians who had been there before were full of suggestions about the site for a permanent camp, how to get in touch with the Indians, and what winter provisions we could probably count upon. The next day, leaving Johnny and the Sturgeon to work on the tying of a fish net, the Hunter and I got in the canoe which we had packed so many weary miles, and cruised down the shore. We wanted to look for a good place for our winter home, and at the same time see what the Indians were doing, if they were still in the locality. A half hour's paddle brought us around a point to

a shore where the bank was high and heavily wooded with maples. My companion pointed out a spring near by, which flowed in a tiny rivulet; I marked the spot well.

Farther down the shore we came upon the Indian village, a dozen or so wigwams collected in a sheltered spot among the trees. The usual uproar began as we drew our canoe to land. Wolfish-looking curs came out from every side, growling and snarling and showing their teeth in an ugly way; the children scurried for cover like partridges, and their mothers retired to the depths of the wigwams. The few men in sight seemed to be busy over their hunting or fishing gear, and hardly looked up from their work. Finally, from a lodge off at one side a man approached who looked every inch his dignity and importance.

"It is Mex-i-nin-ne, the chief," whispered the Hunter.

The Indian came straight to us, greeting Ta-ga-we-nin-ne cordially.

"My friend, the Hunter, is far from home," he said slowly, "but this youth here, I know him not."

"I can answer for myself, O Mex-i-nin-ne, the Wampum Man. I am a trader in charge of a

canoe-load of goods. We arrived but yesterday over the long trail from the Big Water."

"Since when have the white men taken to sending their children into the red men's country?"

My hasty temper has brought more than one quick speech to my tongue in my lifetime, and I replied with some show of spirit now:

"I am Tough Beast's man and his brother's son, and not old, as you see. But I am no child, as Ta-ga-we-nin-ne can say."

The chief smiled at my heat.

"It is many moons since I have seen Gwin-gwaw-ah-ga, your uncle. He was a real man, and his skin was still tough when I met him last; his name was a faithful one. If you are the same breed a year or two doesn't matter much. Think you to remain at Ka-ta-kit-te-kon, or shall you go farther?"

"I had planned to go to Lac du Flambeau, but what would be the prospects of trade here?"

He did not answer directly. "Tell me," he said, "are you a Company trader?"

"Never a Company man as long as water flows down hill."

"We have no trader here, and all the Indians of this region have had to trade with Company agents."

"With your permission, Mex-i-nin-ne, it might be that I would like to build my cabin here, but we can settle about this later. I have a few things in the canoe for you and your people,—let me distribute them."

I knew enough about the Indian character to understand what a good first impression meant, and I was therefore in no hurry to press the matter of the trading privilege. The Hunter went down to the canoe for me and brought up the small piece which contained the presents. I was green all right, but I had learned how to make gifts in Uncle Sandy's store. One must do it like a lord. I took the bundle and laid it on the ground impressively. A man or two had left his work through curiosity, and quite a number of squaws with timid children hiding behind them were edging up.

"My uncle is known, Mex-i-nin-ne, from Mackinaw to Fond du Lac as an honest man and a good trader. He sells good goods, good measure, and expects fair treatment in return. As his man, I shall do the same. Here are a few things from Gwin-gwaw-ah-ga for his friends of the lake country."

I was playing up Uncle Sandy now. Later, I hoped to have a reputation of my own.

I had a fair assortment of goods and I made the most of them. I generously handed out tobacco to the chief and the men; I bestowed on the squaws such things as needles and thread, gay kerchiefs, and tinsel ornaments. I had saved for the last a rather handsome claspknife which I knew would count for much. With a smile I gave it to Mex-i-nin-ne.

"This comes from the country of the Long Knives," I said.

His eyes sparkled with eagerness as he took the knife and tested the blade and spring. "The Long Knives surely make good knives," was his only comment.

Ta-ga-we-nin-ne and I remained for an hour or so gossiping in the village, then paddled back to camp. I was quite satisfied with the beginning I had made.

The next morning our two Indians announced that they were ready to return to the On-to-nog-on. Johnny and I got their supply of corn and tallow ready for the homeward trip, and then we added various things as bonus. They had served us faithfully, like honest men, and deserved good pay and more. They shook hands with us and picked up their scanty packs.

"Could we spare 'em a gun?" whispered

Johnny. "I know the Hunter would appreciate one beyond anything else in our whole outfit. He broke his last spring."

I thought rapidly. We had our own guns which we had used on the trail, and then some ten others with the butts removed for convenience in packing. Yes, we could spare one.

"My friends, one moment. Johnny has reminded me that you need a gun. We will give you one of our own. It will help keep the deer from biting you on the way."

They laughed at my feeble joke, and showed their pleasure which was almost childlike. After all, the Indians were only children of the wilderness. We added some powder and balls to the gift and then waved them good-bye, and into the forest they went, heading for distant Lake Superior. I watched them out of sight with feelings that bordered on sadness, if not homesickness.

"Well, Johnny, old man," I said, "we are now in for it by ourselves. How do you like the looks of the world?"

"O we'll have the time of our lives this winter, —it will be one long, delightful adventure."

Such is the enthusiasm of youth.

We stayed in camp all that day, taking stock,

both of ourselves and of our supplies. We had left the mouth of the On-to-nog-on with two bags of flour, three bags of lyed corn, a keg of tallow, fifteen pounds of tea, twenty-five pounds of sugar, twenty pounds of dried apples, and twenty pounds of salt,—these smaller objects making one piece. We looked our stuff over and found that we had on hand all the flour, one bag of the corn, part of the tallow, about seven or eight pounds of tea, twenty pounds of sugar, all the dried apples, and most of the salt. We were short of corn, but hoped to get enough wild rice from the Indians to make good the lack. With dried berries, what meat we could kill or buy, and fish from the lake in case we wintered here, there was no prospect of hunger before us.

Late in the afternoon Mex-i-nin-ne came over in his canoe to visit us. He and his men had smoked our tobacco and its flavor was good; he would like to have us winter with him, or at least winter on the shores of Ka-ta-kit-te-kon. What was our plan?

The invitation was not unwelcome, provided the chance of trade was good. What could he say of that? The chief now went on to tell us what he had told us before, namely, that as yet the region had no trader of its own, though there

was quite a native population made up of his own tribe around the lake. But his people were not all at the village; they were scattered here and there, fishing, harvesting their gardens, getting ready for winter. To outfit his own tribe for their winter hunting would be business enough. And they were a folk, too, who hunted well; they knew the ways of the wild creatures and gathered many packs of furs every year. Hitherto they had been compelled to go to Lac du Flambeau to buy their goods from the American Fur Company, a hard trip, poor treatment, poor goods. They wanted a trader of their own. And then there were the Indians of Lac Brulé, over the divide to the southeast, no trader there either. It was a good place for business and to winter. Once more,—what was our plan?

I could see from his actions and words that he did not like the Company, and I threw fuel on the flame. Would he and his people be loyal to me if I stood by them? He knew the methods the Company men resorted to sometimes to get rid of opposition—they would give generous presents, they would cut prices, they would undoubtedly make threats and try to frighten and annoy. Old Tough Beast was a free trader, dealing honestly, taking profit, and afraid of no one.

And I was Tough Beast's kin and man. He did not love the Company; no more did I. All we wanted was a place in the wilderness to trade; the Company could go its way, we would go ours. If we wintered at Lac Désert and made it a regular post, would he and his people support us as we supported them?

I had said all of this just as emphatically as I could, and I waited for his reply. It wasn't long in coming.

"My young son," he answered, "I like your talk. Winter near the wigwams of Mex-i-nin-ne and his people."

"Agreed then,—here we stay. Send out word to Lac Brulé and to your own people in this lake country that they have a trader of their own. We have blankets to keep them warm in winter; we have traps to help them catch the beaver and the marten and the mink; we have lead and powder; we have kettles and fire steels, and whatever the squaws need for the wigwams. We have everything a trader ought to have, but no rum. Not a drop of rum goes any more in any brigade old Sandy MacDonald sends out from Mi-chil-li-mack-i-naw. I will sell good goods, if at all, and not make your people drunk so I can rob them of their winter's toil."

The chief was a handsome man and every move he made was like a prince, even if he lived in the wigwam of a savage. My last words had appealed to him.

"It is well that you have come, for there is need of such as you in the red man's country. I am like the rest,—firewater tastes good to me, and when I quit the trader's door with a keg of rum instead of powder or a blanket, and leave behind a winter's catch of peltries, I think as I look at the keg that I am a king. Later, when my women and children are starving in the wigwam I know I am a fool. And there is no fool like that fool whom drink makes into a fool. Therefore, you do well to come as you do,—at least you do well for us. Build your cabin where you please and let us dwell together as friends. *Wa-ah*—I have spoken."

He strode majestically to his canoe and paddled in the fading light across the lake to his village.

Chapter Six

THE next morning Johnny and I loaded our goods and camp equipment into the canoe and moved down the shore to the place by the spring. We looked it over together, and Johnny was as enthusiastic about it as I. We put up our tent, got our stuff under the tarpaulin, and then set to work to build a cabin. We were not very expert with the axe, and the task appeared as big as a mountain to us. But it was one we could not avoid, for it was necessary to have a good warm house before cold weather came.

Two things about the location suited us,—the spring, and the forest, which was dense and stately. We did not lose much time when once we got to work, and in a few days our log house began to take on shape. It was a lean-to structure, twelve by fourteen, eight feet high on the front, with a slope to the rear wall, which was six. We did not square the logs, just notched them, fitting them as tightly as we could. We had the door in front, that is, on the high side, and left two holes for windows, one by the side

of the door, the other on the end. We also planned for a fire-place in the back nearly opposite the door.

I suspect that our work would have made a woodsman laugh, but we felt rather proud of it, nevertheless. Once in a while an Indian would stray over from the village to bring us a bit of game or some fish, and he would always take the opportunity to comment on the white man's notion of house-building. A wigwam was better in every way; there was more air in it!

The roof was my construction; the fireplace, Johnny's. I thought a good deal about that roof as the walls were going up; I wanted a roof that would be strong, warm, and water-tight. At last I had it worked out in my mind. I put three beams across from end to end, as nearly in the line of slant as I could, and then I laid on a tight roof of stout poles sixteen feet long. The length was sufficient to give me a foot or so for eaves at each side. I covered the poles with a layer of leaves; then with a shovel which we had brought without any handle from Mackinaw, I covered the whole thing again with two or three inches of earth which I dug out of a trench behind the rear walls. Lastly, I put on a thatch of great sheets of bark which I peeled here and there

from the yellow and black birches in the neighboring forest. I used poles weighted with heavy rocks to hold down the bark. Almost as soon as it was finished a heavy rain tested it thoroughly, and it did not leak a drop. O, I was proud of that roof!

In the meantime Johnny had chinked the walls with triangular strips of wood which he daubed over with clay, doing it so well that he would stop from time to time and look approvingly at what he had done, remarking that if only he had a tail he'd turn beaver. But his fireplace was a work of art. He gathered all the big stones he could find along the shore, bringing them up in his arms, or even transporting some by canoe, and out of these he constructed the walls. I did not see him build it, for at the very end of September I went off on a little trip for a week with Mex-i-nin-ne. It came about in this way.

One day the chief dropped in on us as we were working on the house. He watched us for a while in silence;—an Indian does not talk till he is quite ready, differing from a white man there. Then he spoke.

"House very good, boys hard workers."

I always tried to show a little reserve and dignity with him, but not so Johnny.

"If you call us boys, where do you find your men?" he asked with a laugh.

Mex-i-nin-ne shrugged his shoulders and turned to me.

"How would Young Tough Beast like to take a little trip with me? Some of my people are gathering rice at a lake a day's canoe journey from here, and I want to visit them. It would not be bad business for you to take a few bales of goods along and thus let them know there is a trader in the country."

I snapped at the offer eagerly, and the next morning the chief called for me in his canoe. I loaded in three bales which Johnny and I had made up,—blankets, a few articles of camp equipment, traps, axes, knives, powder, lead, and some miscellaneous things which would appeal to the squaws and children. I left Johnny hard at work on his fireplace.

We coasted down the shore to the outlet which is at the western end of the lake, and worked our way down the stream. I later learned that it was the headwaters of the Wisconsin River. We were a little unequal when it came to ability as canoemen, but the chief from his place in the stern made it easy for me. He knew the route so well that he could tell me when to watch for

snags and rocks. All that day, with hardly a pipe, we paddled down stream. Then late in the afternoon we turned into a creek that came in from the west, a tributary that the chief called Rice Creek, and just at nightfall we made the Indian camp.

The usual hubbub from the dogs received us, but my companion silenced them with his paddle. We were made welcome at once, but with no special show or manner. Since I came with Mex-i-nin-ne I was regarded as a guest rather than a trader, and was invited with simple friendliness to a place by the campfire, where corn broth and venison were set before me. Nobody asked me any impertinent questions; no comments of any sort were made. Later, I was shown to a place to lay my blanket in a lodge with the chief.

The next few days were interesting days to me, for I saw for the first time in my life the gathering of the wild rice, which in many localities was such an important part of the Indians' food supply in that early period. This lake to which we had come was perhaps a mile across, but so shallow that it was hardly more than a wet marsh, and the wild rice grew over it like a great waving field of grain.

The squaws were working early and late at the harvest. They went in canoes two by two,—one woman in the stern, pushing the craft with a pole which had a fork in the end to keep it from sinking in the mud, the other woman facing her in the bow. As the canoe was pushed into the rice field, the woman in the prow, with the sweep of a stick which she held in one hand, bent over the gunwale a quantity of the rice and then skillfully beat it with another stick, so that the bearded, unhusked heads fell into the canoe. When the forward part of the canoe was pretty well filled and sunk low in the water, the woman in the prow took the pole and propelled the canoe for a while, and the other squaw threshed off the grain. In this way they kept their craft on a fairly even keel till they secured a load.

As fast as the canoes were filled, they were brought to land and the contents put on the drying frames. This again was an interesting process to me. The Indians had built long racks or scaffolds of flat cedar slabs some three feet above the ground, and on these the boatloads were piled as they came in. Slow fires were kept burning under these frames till the rice was dry and cured, usually about a day. Next, a half bushel or so of the dry, unhusked kernels was dumped

Squaws Harvesting Rice
(From an Old Engraving)

into a tough deer or moose skin and placed in a hole in the ground made for the purpose, and a hardy warrior danced and stamped and stepped upon them till they were shelled out clean and clear from the husk, which was winnowed out by tossing on a birch bark frame. After it was hulled and cleaned, the rice was stored in sacks made of fawnskins, about a bushel in a sack. As I learned later, a fawnskin was recognized as a standard quantity in the trade of the region.

I secured without much trouble three fawnskins of it at two *plus,* or skins, a bushel, and paid for it with blankets, a blanket a bushel. Quite a number of the Indians were willing to take advantage of this opportunity to secure winter supplies, and I was able to dispose of my goods quickly. Of course, most of the trading was on credit, the buyers agreeing to bring their furs to Lac Désert at the close of their winter hunting. Blankets, traps, powder, and lead were staple articles, and in great demand. I also sold several twists of tobacco, and much thread for sewing mats and skins. On the whole, I felt quite elated at the result of my first trading venture, and made presents right and left at departure.

It took Mex-i-nin-ne and me two days to work our way home, but we arrived safely. As I

landed in front of the cabin I gave a whoop to notify Johnny, and he came down on the run to help me tote up the rice and other stuff. In my absence he had sold almost a bale of blankets, and also got several chunks of smoked venison with which to stock again our larder.

"Now come and see the fireplace," said Johnny eagerly; "I've put in almost every waking minute in building it. It doesn't look so bad, either."

"Will it draw?"

"Draw? Why, there's a regular hurricane in the house when a fire's a-going in it. Draw? Let me advise you to pull your cap on tight when you get in the door."

I hurried along after him. Ah, it towered above the rear wall like the smokestack of a foundry! We went in. As neat a fireplace as I ever saw confronted me, and a little fire was all laid in it ready to be touched off.

"Just you wait till I show you how it will draw. Beat a mustard plaster."

He got a fire steel, struck a spark, and in a jiffy was fanning a tiny flame the smoke of which eddied and whirled straight up into the cavernous throat of the flue.

"Hang on to your cap now, she's a-goin' to roar."

In the meantime I was looking at the fireplace from every angle. It was full three feet and a half wide, and deep and roomy. But the marvel of it was the arch in front,—still hardly an arch at all, for the front above the opening was supported on one big flat slab of rock.

"Where in the world did you get that stone?" I asked with bulging eyes.

"I found it down the shore a half mile, and brought it up on a raft. I was afraid to try to get it into the canoe for fear I'd knock the bottom clean out of it. I moved it on rollers from the top of the bank."

"Yes, but before you got to the bank. How did you ever get it up the bluff?"

"O that was easy. While I was unloading it on the shore three braves came along who wanted to do some trading. I said: 'Now, mighty men of muscle, you've first got to help me lift this stone to the top of the bluff before I show a blanket or a steel trap.' They were curious to know what I was going to do with the rock when once I got it to the top, and so I had to take them up to the house first and show them where I was going to put it. 'White man heap big fool,' was their comment, but they lifted like good fellows. The rest was easy enough."

That night we cooked our first meal in the fireplace.

During the next few days we finished the building completely. A heavy door of hewn planks was hung on a pair of hinges we had brought along, and a wooden latch improvised. We also built a couple of bunks in the end opposite the side windows,—one over the other in real lumber shanty style. We framed in the two windows and made some heavy shutters for them. Later we "glazed" them by stretching fawn skins, scraped and greased, which made a fair substitute for glass.

Finally October came, and with it some pleasant days. Our trading went on satisfactorily. The Indians were leaving now in every direction for their winter hunting camps, and they came to us for substantial credits before they departed.

Right here a word about the Indian trade. Johnny Courteau and I had brought with tremendous toil our canoe load of goods to the heart of the Indian country. And we were only two out of hundreds of adventurers, who were braving hardship in a variety of forms in that great Northern country, for the bales of fur which were the prizes at the end of the trail. Such goods as

we had brought, fair samples of those which filled Uncle Sandy's store at Mackinaw, were the staple articles of this trade everywhere. Two centuries of contact with the Indian had determined just those things the Indian needed in order to live. I have said *needed to live,* which was the literal truth. The Indian could not live without the white man's trade. The time had been when he was sufficient unto himself, but it was not so now. He had to have the white man's blankets and cloth, his guns, his axes and knives, his fire steels, and his kettles. Later, he could not live without his flour and pork.

His existence, as he lived it, was a real hand-to-mouth struggle. He bought on credit in the fall a scanty supply of a few necessary things, then with his squaw and children went to his winter hunting grounds,—some lake, or stream, or forest section which custom had allotted to him. His winter's catch of furs went to pay, whole or in part, his debts of the fall before. And when the next fall came he repeated the process, an endless slavery which the white man had created for him.

Take him all in all, the Indian was an honest debtor—that is, he paid his credits which the trader had advanced him if he could. But he had

to do so, or starve. If he did not hunt, he got no furs; and without furs he could not buy any of the things which his life in the forest, simple as it was, demanded. So he worked hard, lived like the savage he was, and paid an enormous price in prime peltries for the goods he got.

The system with its risks was to blame for this. I can best illustrate by citing what Uncle Sandy did in his business at Mackinaw; I had handled his accounts enough to know all about it. Whenever we outfitted a man or a brigade for an independent expedition, we charged the trader an advance of eighty per cent on the first cost of inported goods, and fifteen per cent on domestic goods,—this for the transportation to Mackinaw. Then to that price we added thirty-three and a third per cent for our profit. After that the trader could charge what he pleased, and what he pleased was high enough! One thing, however,—usage made the prices tolerably uniform.

The unit of trade was the beaver skin, and a pound of it was called a *plus,* or in the Wisconsin trade a *skin,* and reckoned at two dollars. The term *plus,* or *skin,* was kept even when beaver skins were not handled much in trade. An Indian would buy goods in the fall on credit to the extent of, let us say, twenty-five or thirty

skins. His outfit would be about as follows at wilderness prices:

1 gun	10	*plus*	or skins
2 blankets	8	"	"
1 beaver trap	4	"	"
1 large knife	½	"	"
1 half axe	1	"	"
1 pint of powder	1	"	"
30 balls	1	"	"
1 twist tobacco—1 fathom	2	"	"
miscellaneous	3	"	"

In addition he would receive as a present a flint, an awl, a needle, a gun worm, vermilion, beads, and various other trinkets for which no charge was made.

When spring came and the hunting was over, the Indian would bring in his furs and possibly a *mo-cock* of maple sugar to settle his account. Here were the prices he might get for a typical season's work:

1 mo-cock sugar	4	*plus*	or skins
4 beaver	8	"	"
1 otter	2	"	"
3 martens	1	"	"
20 muskrats	2	"	"
3 racoons	1	"	"
2 lynx	1	"	"

2 bear	4	*plus* or skins
4 bucks	2	" "
2 fishers	1	" "

If he had enough peltries to pay his bill, well and good. If he did not, why, the loss fell on the trader.

But now I must go on with my story. By the end of October Johnny and I sold goods to the amount of five hundred skins, which was not bad, as we estimated trade. We had yet before us the winter months in which we hoped to do a little business with scattering parties who would come in for various things they had forgotten, or been unable to buy earlier.

One day in the middle of October there appeared at our cabin an Indian whom we had not seen before, and while he talked a good deal about an outfit he did not actually arrange for anything. Just as he was leaving, he pulled out from somewhere in his clothes a piece of paper which he said an Indian from the Lac du Flambeau country had given him for us. It was a greasy, soiled page from some small account book, creased and wrinkled from much handling. Curious, I opened it and read:

"Trader, whoever you are, at Desert Lake! We notify you that you are getting into our ter-

ritory, and it will not be healthy for you to stay much longer. Be advised and get out before we call."

And then right below, evidently in case we might not be English, was written in bad French about the same thing:

"O Marchan quikonque a lac vieu desert! Noo voo avertisons que vous envahisser notre teritoir et il ne sera pa pour votre santer de rester plus long temp. Soyez averti et aller vous an avon notre visite."

The only signature was the figure of a gun crudely drawn below the French part of the missive. I read both versions to Johnny who took the paper, and although he could not read it he studied it a long while.

"Well, what do you think?" I asked at last.

"Big bluff from somebody, all right. He doesn't dare to sign his name — he makes his mark. From the looks of it I should judge he was a son of a gun."

He laughed long and loud, and I could see he did not attach any importance to the threats.

"Whatever his name is, it was sent by some agent of the American Fur Company, Johnny. That's the method they use. If they can scare out opposition, they do so every time. If they can-

not scare out the opposition, then they try to drive it out. It's their first move on us."

"*Vive la guerre!*" cried Johnny. "They'll find us ready."

We had been planning on shutting up the cabin for a week or two while we made a trading excursion to the little settlement of Indians along the lakes to the west of us. It was a trip which needed both of us, for there were several portages to make, and much hard work in it; we debated now whether we should go. Finally, as the days went by, we thought less seriously of the warning and made up our minds to go just the same. But as a matter of precaution, we decided to *cache* all our goods and supplies away from the cabin. It was Johnny's idea, and a good one.

Some fifteen or twenty rods distant, in a little ravine, we dug a pit four or five deep and perhaps ten feet long, which we walled up with cedar slabs. We deposited in this retreat all our remaining stock of goods, our supplies, and whatever kit we had in the cabin, keeping out four pieces for barter on our trip. Then we put slabs over the "grave," as Johnny called it, and covered it all over with earth, brush, and leaves. We so carefully removed all traces of our work

that it would fool an Indian, to say nothing of some snooping agents of the American Fur Company.

"Now let them come," remarked Johnny, as we locked the cabin and went down to the canoe. "Suppose they do come to drive us out—they'll find the place empty, and will decide we've gone for good. See?"

"Yes, if only they come while we are away!"

"Well, if they don't, they'll wish they had!"

"You bet, Johnny. Old Sandy MacDonald's man won't give up without a fight."

Chapter Seven

WE SET out October twenty-seventh, into a world beautiful with the splendor of the autumn frost. The weather was still perfect, and unless there came a sudden and unexpected change we counted on nothing but a delightful outing.

We coasted down the lake to the outlet, and then made our way into the Wisconsin. At this point the river is nothing more than a creek and twists about uncertainly, as if trying to make up its mind as to its course. Some ten miles down we turned aside into Portage Creek which we ascended to Little Portage Lake, and thence on by another creek to Lake Chemung. Mex-i-nin-ne and one of his Indians had drawn for us on a piece of birch bark a rude map of the country, which seemed to us mostly lakes. But we possessed that boundless confidence of youth which trusts to get through anywhere, and so we paddled serenely on. We made Chemung Lake safely, and then proceeded to hunt for the portage trail to the west. We nosed along the shore, landing here and there to inspect favorable-look-

ing spots, but it was not till late in the afternoon that we discovered the landing. It was a good place and we decided to camp.

The next day we packed over the portage to Black Oak Lake, crossed it, and with two more short portages made Spring Lake, and next Spring Creek, which brought us to the south end of that sprawling monster of the forest country, Crooked Lake. Mex-i-nin-ne had made it plain to us that we must head directly west from the outlet of Spring Creek across the lake, where we should find, coming in from a chain of small lakes to the southwest, a stream which would give us a short-cut to the Man-i-to-weesh.

We had no difficulty in finding the inlet, and when night came we were at the portage leading to Trout Creek. We caught some fish which we baked for supper. The next day, after much paddling, poling, pulling, and hauling, we made High Lake, and went into camp on an island which lies not far from the eastern end. We had worked like slaves that day, but were in good spirits nevertheless. In two days more we ought to reach the Indian village, if Mex-i-nin-ne was right in his descriptions.

We took particular pains in getting ready for the night. It was an ideal camping place and

we made the most of it. We had a cheery fire, as good a supper as our combined skill as cooks could devise, and beds of springy boughs. Night came on, and we sat by the crackling fire and talked of this and that. There was just moon enough to cast a faint shimmer over the water; it was such an evening as comes once in a while in late Indian summer as consolation for what is about to follow. Suddenly, as we talked, Johnny caught me by the arm and pointed out upon the lake. I looked and saw a canoe with three or four paddlers coming in our direction.

"White men or Indians?" I asked.

"Can't make out — possibly they're going to put in here."

The canoe came gliding on like a phantom, straight toward us. Perhaps a hundred yards from the landing place the paddlers paused, evidently at command, and a voice called, *"Ah-heen ain e-kum-me-guk?* What news?"

"Johnny, that's no Indian, but you answer— you speak Chippewa with a convincing accent.

"All right, I'll give him a shot." He put his hands to his mouth: "My friends, lots of news. The nights are cool now, the mosquitoes don't bite any more, and we shall have snow before spring."

Somebody in the canoe laughed, then the party headed for the landing. We sat still and waited. The canoe swung in to shore, and a man stepped out. We heard him say in French: "You men stay here—I'll not be gone long." A few moments later there walked into our firelight the most villainous looking mortal I ever laid eyes on. He was thickset, about fifty years old, with a reddish beard framing in a heavy, cruel-looking face, and he limped slightly as he walked. But he was not crippled—one leg seemed merely a trifle shorter than the other.

He looked us over impudently, then scanned our goods, the little tent, our cooking kit, before he said a word.

"Well, sonnies, where do you come from?"

He spoke in English, as if he were sure of us, and of himself.

"That's our business, not yours," I said.

"O sure," he answered with an evil laugh; "and the same answer, I presume, for where you're going!"

"The same answer."

"Where's your main camp?"

I was losing my temper fast. The man was so insolent and insulting that I could not keep from it.

"Look here, sir," I said as calmly as I could, "I don't like your manner,—suppose you hit the trail out of here."

I confess that such a speech from me was hardly polite, but there was not overmuch politeness wasted in the forests of the fur country in that day.

The caller growled like a savage animal, and I thought he would leap upon me. But I was ready for him. He weighed at least thirty pounds more than I did, and was probably stronger in every way, but I did not think of that as I got to my feet and looked him in the eye.

"You come with a mighty impudent air to make a call, whoever you are. Now, you go!"

"I have a mind to stick your head in the fire, you green young fool—"

In a twinkling I had slid out of my heavy hunting jacket, but a word from Johnny made me pause.

"Let me move him with this!"

As he spoke there came a significant click, and the man and I both looked around. Johnny had picked up his rifle and was aiming it from across the fire straight at the man's head.

"I'm getting nervous—don't make me pull the trigger before I want to. *"Marche!"*

Our visitor turned about as if moved by a spring, and lost no time in getting to the shore. The canoe put in for him, then moved away across the shimmering lake.

"Good riddance to bad rubbish," ejaculated Johnny, when finally it disappeared in the distance.

For a full five minutes we stood and gazed out upon the lake, trying to follow the movements of the mysterious canoe in the dim light.

"I'll bet that's the man who sent us that friendly greeting to Lac Désert," I said at length; "he looks villain enough for that or any other cutthroat deed. Where you think he comes from?"

"Lac du Flambeau, probably."

"What's he doing here?"

"O just exploring around, or off on some such expedition as our own."

"In that case he'll doubtless hunt up that Indian village we're headed for."

"Perhaps. Still, water routes are so numerous in this lake country that he may turn in most anywhere. We'd better go on just the same, don't you think so?"

Naturally, I was not the sort to back out before the trip was finished. After a little more talk we chunked up the fire and rolled ourselves in our

blankets, anxious for the morning and the next day's work.

I do not know how long we slept, but our awakening was a rude one. I thought at first a terrible wind had risen and blown the tent in on us, or that a tree had fallen across us, for we were suddenly engulfed in folds of canvas which seemed to weigh down upon us with suffocating force. We rolled and struggled like cats in a bag, then a voice said:

"Have you got their gun?"

When we heard that we knew what had happened—old Red Beard, or whoever he was, had come back with his crew and bundled us up in our beds. Johnny was grinding out some choice French expressions through his teeth, but otherwise we made no outcry. After a while violent hands pulled us out of the tangle and tied us hand and foot. We had no chance to resist, for before we were fairly unswaddled we were bound. Somebody had thrown fuel on the fire, and the blaze lit up a weird scene. Sure enough, our caller of the evening had returned, he and as evil a gang of half-breed scoundrels as ever lived.

"Ye aren't so high and mighty now, are you, my fine little boys? Running me out of camp with a gun, as if you were cocks of the woods!"

He leered at us as we lay side by side on the ground. Then he kicked us both a few times with his heavy moccasined feet, ripped out some oaths, and turned to his crew:

"Tote their packs down to the canoe, and see that you get every scrap of their outfit, too. Don't leave them as much as a knife or a frying pan to keep them alive."

Willing hands now seized our bales, tent, camp equipment, food supplies, everything we had, in short, except the clothes upon our backs, and carried the stuff down to the edge of the lake. So far we had not said a word in reply to all the abuse and manhandling that had been so generously dealt out to us. But when the scoundrel turned to one of his men and directed him to go through our pockets, we both found our tongues. Someway, it stirred us more to have some dirty villain rolling us over and searching us than it did to see our stuff stolen before our eyes. Johnny raved in all the languages he knew—three at least, and developed oratorical ability far beyond what I had ever known in him before. And I, —well, I worked myself into such a rage that I fairly choked over my words. And all the while that half-breed cut-throat was rolling us about like dunnage in a canoe, and taking everything we

had on us. O how we called down wrath on him and all his kindred!

Old Red Beard laughed in glee to hear us give vent to our feelings, but he continued his methodical robbery just the same. When the men reported that all our goods were at the shore, he took a birch bark torch and went over the camp and its outskirts, searching as if he had lost a needle. When he was satisfied that nothing had been overlooked, he set about the one thing that remained—the disposal of our canoe. He himself lugged that up from the landing and laid it across the crackling fire, which bit into the oily birch with a roar. In a moment the handsome craft was writhing and twisting like a soul in torment.

"Now, my hearties, good night and sleep tight!"

So saying, he limped off down to the shore where his crew had doubtless already loaded in our outfit, and away they paddled into the night, whither we knew not.

I was the first to speak.

"Well, Johnny, how are you feeling?"

"When I think of the long fast ahead of me, I wish I'd eaten more supper. But the old lame devil fooled himself once, anyway."

He chuckled to himself.

"What do you mean?"

"I have just remembered that I left the axe over where I peeled that birch tree last night, ten rods out in the brush at least. I'll bet he didn't find that."

"But we can't eat an axe," I answered mournfully.

"No, but we can build a shelter and do other useful things with it. But now, let's get loose. It ought to be easy."

I tugged and strained at my thongs, but did not find one that yielded any. But Johnny had better luck,—he always got out of any fix he fell into. While I was working away, wriggling and twisting, I could hear him panting and grunting in his efforts to free himself. I don't know to this day how he did it, but in a few minutes I saw him sit up.

"My soul!" he murmured, "I've just about peeled the skin off my wrists. Those moosehide thongs are as tough as iron. Here goes for my feet now."

In a few minutes he got up, walked about, danced, stamped, rubbed himself, to get his blood to circulating again. Then he came over to help me, but the fellow who tied me had done it well. The knots resisted Johnny's aching fingers.

"Just rest easy a while till I go and find that blessed axe."

He scurried about and gathered some birch bark which he rolled into a torch. He was about to light it, when he paused abruptly.

"I don't think I'll do that just yet. If old Red Beard from out on the lake should see a light whisking about here he might feel like coming back to finish the job. I'll see what I can do in the dark."

He went off into the undergrowth, and was gone what seemed to me an hour, but only a few minutes probably, and then he came back with the axe. In a jiffy he rubbed asunder the thongs that bound me, and I was free, too.

We did not build up more fire during the rest of the night—just nursed it along with little sticks to keep it alive till daybreak. Nor did we go to sleep again. We found it chilly without our blankets as we hovered over the coals, waiting anxiously for dawn.

"I suppose Red Beard expected we'd lie here and freeze," I said savagely in one of my fits of rage. "But, Johnny, we shan't freeze yet. I intend to live long enough to even up matters with that scoundrel, if I can find him in this wilderness."

"No fear about finding him,—*diable boiteux*, lame devil that he is,—every Indian in this region will know who he is and where his post is. Yes, we'll call upon him some day sure. And then! And then!"

Morning came, a frosty, late October morning, and we were hungry, hungrier than usual. But there was nothing to eat. We looked the camp-site over—our callers had stripped it "slick" and clean. At Johnny's suggestion, we set off in opposite directions to explore the island to see if we could find anything edible. We met half an hour later at our desolate camp. I had discovered nothing, but Johnny had come upon a porcupine and speedily knocked him on the head.

I fairly whooped with glee as I watched Johnny dress the unlucky beast with the axe,—not very artistically either, I am afraid. Then we roasted him over the coals. As we breakfasted we counselled together, and here, as usual, Johnny's was the head that contained wisdom.

"We'll spend the day making a raft. We can do it out of sight of the shore, so that when night comes we shall need only to tie it together and put out. We'll also bury the fire so it will last till night; in that way we'll be able to transport a brand with us to the shore. A fire is a mighty

welcome thing, you know, these chilly nights. To-morrow, we'll turn our noses back toward Lac Désert."

Chapter Eight

ALL that day we worked quietly in the timber on our raft. We rolled several big dead logs down near the shore; we cut poles for crosspieces, and peeled bark and got withes ready for tie-material. We dined on what was left of the porcupine, and kept the fire alive. When night came we got the logs into the water, fastened on our crosspieces, and prepared to embark. Johnny had chopped out a couple of rude paddles, and trimmed up two long slim poles. He had also found a hollow ash stub which he cut down, and one end of which he stopped with mud. Into this he put some fire and bound it carefully on the raft. His last feat, however, was the crowning one.

I noticed him in the afternoon poking about the place where our campfire had been, and at last saw him kick out a piece of bent iron which had been set for a ring in the prow of our canoe. He straightened this out and hammered it into what looked like a huge hook. He even heated it in the fire and pounded a kind of sharp barbed point on it.

"What is that for?" I asked.

"Tonight when we paddle our old raft to the mainland I'm going to catch a *mah-ki-nonge*—perhaps. I've saved a piece of the porcupine for bait. We can't afford to miss any chances for getting grub, you know."

We pushed off the raft as soon as it grew dusk, and when we were well afloat Johnny put out his big fishhook. He had tied it to a float by means of a stout thong cut off from the bottom of his deerskin jacket; the float itself he paid out on the end of some seventy-five feet of rope made by tying six-foot sections of spruce root, or *wa-tap*, together. It was a clumsy rig, but the best we could make under the circumstances.

It took us probably half an hour or more to work our heavy craft across the intervening half-mile of water to the eastern shore. We ran up on the beach at random, and I carried the precious fire ashore. Johnny now began to haul in his mighty trolling line.

"My, it pulls hard—don't know whether it's the float and line sagging down or whether I've got a——"

Just then there was a splash out thirty or forty feet from shore.

"Pull in Johnny," I said, "pull in as fast as you

can! Drag him ashore on this sandy beach!"

Johnny jumped off the tottering raft to the sand and began to haul in hand over hand.

"When the float comes in, grab it and snake ashore whatever we've got."

I peered hard at the water. When the float came near I did not hesitate over getting my feet wet—not I; I made a lunge for the stick of wood, seized it and ran up the beach. There was a flopping, and I heard Johnny laugh. When I stopped, he was rolling in the sand hugging something in his arms.

"Hang on to the line," he gasped, "this chap may slip away from me yet."

It was a fine old muskellunge. We succeeded in killing him with the axe, then we wormed our way through the brush in the pale moonlight a few hundred yards to a sheltered spot. We were wet and cold and hungry, but we had fire, and we had food.

The muskellunge that we pulled from the waters of High Lake weighed, I should guess, twenty-five pounds, but, hungry as we were, it did not look so large. We lost no time in blowing our smoking embers into a good fire, and broiling some generous portions of fish steak. When we had devoured these, we broiled some more. Our

next move was to put up a brush shelter, a lean-to, facing the warmth of the fire, and there on balsam boughs, shivering and sweating by turns, we spent the night. Johnny rigged up a sort of rack on which to smoke what was left of the fish, and for fully half the night he kept a smudge going under it. It was our only food supply, we knew not for how long.

When morning came we were ready to start for Lac Désert,—vaguely situated, as we reckoned, to the east of us some twenty-five or thirty miles. But we knew we had made a long detour to the northward on our way over and we had no idea of the country straight ahead of us. However, the only way was to strike out boldly. And the fire? We debated that carefully. It looked like an impossibility to carry any with us; and we had no flint, otherwise we could have used the axe for a steel.

"The only thing do," said Johnny, "is to push ahead. We can live a day or two on the partially smoked fish—we can't smoke it any more, that's certain, without losing valuable time. If we get too hard up I think I can manufacture a fire drill and bow as the Indians do in a pinch. Now we must make the most of this fine weather and hit the trail out of here."

We started. I carried the fish in a bark knapsack, slung on my back by thongs of *wa-tap,* and Johnny carried the axe. The sky was overcast, but we took our bearings as well as we could from our general sense of direction. Our progress was exceedingly difficult. The country was tangled swamp and timber, and after a few hours we had no idea of how far we had come, or where we were. We crossed one or two little streams which seemed to be flowing to meet us, and then the region became too low and wet to travel through. We turned off to the left, and headed more to the north for the lake country. There we hoped to fall in with some Indian hunter, or strike some portage trail.

We traveled on as best we could all that day, and when night came we were in about as hopeless a section of country as one could imagine. It was with difficulty that we were able to find a suitable place for a camp, which in the absence of fire meant hardly more than a hole to crawl into out of the wind.

We found a place at last, filled it with leaves which we gathered here and there, and then we thatched the place over with branches which Johnny cut with his axe. It was scarcely a camp at all,—about such a sleeping place as a bear or

a wolf would choose, possibly, in place of something better. We passed a miserable night though we snuggled up together and tried to keep each other warm.

"We certainly have got to build a fire," said Johnny more than once in the long night, and I agreed with him. "When daylight comes I'll see what I can do."

He was so eager to begin he could hardly wait long enough to eat his breakfast of fish, and while he ate it he kept saying it would taste better with more cooking. He hunted around till he found a dead, dry cedar four or five inches in diameter; out of this he hewed a flat board a couple of feet long. Next, with the point of the fishhook he gouged in it a round hole half an inch deep, and with the blade of the axe he cut a narrow groove from the hole to the edge of the board. The block, the first part of the fire-making apparatus, was ready.

He next fashioned from dry hard wood a stick, or drill, about eighteen inches long, with each end pointed and rounded so as to fit easily into a cavity the size of the one gouged in the board. A square flat piece of hard wood with a little hollow dug in it was devised to fit on the top end of the drill like a socket. He now cut from a sapling

a bent part to which he strung the leather thong he had used in catching the muskellunge; this was his bow.

When it came to tinder he took special pains. He collected fine dry pine needles; he made thin curls of the inner part of the birch bark; he gathered punk from the dry hearts of decaying logs. At last, he was ready to make the supreme effort, an effort, possibly, on which our very lives depended. He took a turn around the drill with the bow string, adjusted one end of it in the hole in the block, holding it upright by means of the socket, which he pressed down upon the other end with his left hand; and then with his right hand he pulled the bow back and forth. This made the drill revolve with lightning speed; he now bore down with gentle pressure, and soon a wisp of smoke began to arise from the cavity where the friction was igniting the wood dust made by the drill. Johnny directed me to feed into the notch some of the powdered punk and fine bits of the pine needles while he sawed away the harder. As the tiny spark kindled the tinder I swept it out of the notch into a pile of dry material prepared for it, and soon we had a blaze, a fire, a blessed fire.

"We shall not freeze at any rate," said Johnny

with a great sigh of relief, as he packed up his precious fire tools in several folds of bark; "no, we shall not freeze. And with any kind of luck we ought to find something to eat."

We broiled some of our fish, and talked as we ate,—talked and warmed up, for the night had chilled us through and through. After a while we got sight of the sun for a short time and turned our course again to the east. It was a terrible day's tramp. We floundered in swamps; we wallowed through tangles of underbrush; we waded creeks and skirted lakes. The day soon became cloudy, and with the twisting and turning we again lost all idea of our direction.

Toward night we came to a sluggish stream that was nearly choked up with wild rice, and an idea occurred to us that we put into execution at once,—we would gather some of the grain to help out our supply of food. We set to work immediately to make a raft, but it was dark before we had it completed. So we built a fire with our fire stick, constructed as good a shelter for the night as we could, and dined again on fish. We were getting hungrier all the time, but the semi-smoked and broiled muskellunge did not taste any better for that.

To crown our troubles the weather changed

during the night and a cold rain set in which soon drenched us to the skin. We had not taken pains to make a tight roof over our heads, and here we were, surprised in the middle of the night by a downpour. We shivered through it till morning, and then ate more fish. We did not wait for the rain to cease but immediately launched our raft. We poled the clumsy thing into the rice fields and started to beat off the heads into big sheets of bark which we had spread over the logs. But the rain had dampened the grain till it was next to impossible to do anything with our clubs, so as a last resort we had to strip the stalks by hand—a slow and unsatisfactory process. It was noon, at least, before we had a fair sized heap of unhusked grain and straw. All this time we had been working in the chilling rain, and we were completely benumbed when at last we returned to camp. It took us some time longer to rig up a drying platform with a bark roof over it to protect the rice and the fire from the wet.

The rest of that afternoon and far into the night we kept the fire going; we stirred the rice constantly and finally had it dry enough to thresh out. Here Johnny showed his skill again. With the axe he chopped out a trough about the size of a sap trough in which to trample out the grain

since we had no mooseskin bag. In this trough we rubbed with our hands, trod with our feet, pounded gently with small blocks, and at last got the grain free of the husks and chaff. It was a long, slow process, but one that rewarded us with a few quarts of clean white rice.

We had no way of telling time, but it was certainly past midnight before we had our precious stock of food winnowed and cleaned. And we were hungry, ravenously hungry. We cleared away the fire brands from the best of our fire, poured out a quantity of rice in the ashes, spreading it out carefully, then we raked ashes and fire back over it—and waited. Would it burn, or would it parch? If we had had a kettle, or even a frying pan, the task would have been easy, but now?

From time to time we poked into the ashes a little to see how the process was coming on, and speedily discovered that some of the rice was burning, some of it was parching. We rescued what we could of the parched kernels and, getting the ashes off as best we might, we dined by the firelight, and washed our meal down with the creek water. Working on the raft all day in the rain had given us no time to dry off, and it was a good thing for us that we hovered for

several hours under our bark shelter by the fire while drying and husking the rice.

I have no idea where we went in the course of the next few days. We were caught in a maze of swamps, lakes, and winding creeks, and we wandered this way and that, trying to get out of the awful labyrinth. The weather was raw and rainy, as is frequently the case in the first days of November, and we were wet and cold all the time. In our wretchedness it was more comfortable to go on than to rest, and the nights were long drawn-out horrors. It was not till we were half dead from this continued exposure that we hit on a way to get a few hours of fairly comfortable sleep each night.

When evening came we found a piece of level, well drained ground and built a roaring fire. When it was pretty well burned out we cleaned the embers away, spread some branches over the ashes, and erected a bark shelter over the spot. There we slept, cuddled up together like a couple of bears in a den. With a good fire on each side of us, and the warmth of the heated ground radiating from underneath, we were fairly comfortable for hours.

But the question of food was the real one, now that we had solved the sleeping problem, for it

was only too evident that starvation was pursuing us like a wolf-pack. When I looked at Johnny I saw that he was haggard and gaunt; and as for myself, I had pulled my belt up several notches in the last week. We were expecting all the time to come upon some Indian's trap line, or hit on some trail that would lead to the smoke of a wigwam, but we could not seem to get out of that endless swamp. And yet, get out of it we must, for our rice was gone, and we were growing weaker and more bewildered every day.

The morning of the sixth of November came, as I reckoned our wandering, and we had nothing to eat. Johnny had looked for edible roots and bulbs along the creek the night before, but found none. And a search in the morning was equally fruitless. We, therefore, shouldered the axe and the fire-making outfit and set out almost at random, for it did not seem to matter much where we went. We crossed a creek, worked our way through a wet, boggy swamp, and at last came out pretty well soaked into a country that was somewhat higher and better timbered. We stopped and gazed about a little, and suddenly my eye caught sight of a blaze on a tree not far away.

"Why, that's a trap blaze. Let's look around a little," said Johnny.

He went down into the dense undergrowth along the edge of the swamp to investigate, and soon called back to me that he had found a deadfall, probably set for a mink or marten. We now deliberated. Here we were at last on a trap line, and somewhere to the right or to the left of us, near-by or miles away, was the Indian's wigwam. To find the Indian meant shelter, something to eat, and getting back to our cabin on Lac Désert. And to miss finding him meant in a few days,—well, as we looked into each other's gaunt and shrunken faces it was plain what the end would be.

"Now, for that Injun," said Johnny with emphasis, "we've just got to find that Injun."

He had hardly uttered the words before we heard in the distance the sound of a rifle.

Chapter Nine

THE sound of that gun was sweet music to our ears, and we responded to it with a long drawn-out halloo that we hoped would reach the hunter, whoever he was. We listened for a few moments, but got back no answer; then we set out as fast as we could travel in the direction whence the report had come. We traversed a half mile of hard country along the fringe of the forest before we paused and hallooed once more with all the lung power we possessed. This time it seemed as though we got an answer from a little to the left where the swamp bent away to the south. We hurried along, stumbling through thickets and over logs, frantic to come up to this phantom hunter of the forest. Finally we stopped and called again.

"Ho!" yelled Johnny in Chippewa, "ho, my friend, give us help!"

We sat down and waited, two very dirty, bedraggled and altogether sorry mortals. From time to time Johnny would put his hands to his lips and trail out a wolf-like yelp of woe. "That's to hurry him up a little," he explained. We re-

ceived after a few minutes a second answer; then we heard nothing more. We waited and waited, and were almost ready to start on again, when out of the shelter of the trees glided an Indian, holding a gun in the crook of his arm. We had heard no sound, and he was upon us before we knew it. We gazed at him as at a ghost, for we knew him well—it was Ta-ga-we-nin-ne, our valiant man of the On-to-nog-on trail. I have seen many unexpected faces in my day, but no face in all my life that looked quite so good to me as his.

We greeted him with joy that embarrassed him, but he did not ask any questions, only motioned for us to come with him. He picked up the axe and bundle we carried and headed away through the forest, and we followed. Once he stopped as we lagged behind a little, and remarked laconically:

"Much fine venison at the wigwam is waiting to be eaten."

"And we can eat much fine venison, O Ta-ga-we-nin-ne, and then be hungry still."

After going half a mile, perhaps, we came to a beautiful spot not far from a little stream that gurgled through the trees. And here stood a wigwam with smoke curling from the top.

"Nah-ma, the Sturgeon, is somewhere about,"

remarked our guide, as we came in sight of the camp.

We were led straight to the lodge and bidden to enter. The Indian spread a mat for us on the ground, poked up the fire, set a kettle with a piece of venison in it on the blaze, then went out for more wood. When he came back we were eating; each of us had torn off a bit of the meat, before it was fairly warmed, and was devouring it wolfishly. Ta-ga-we-nin-ne watched us calmly, handed us some water once or twice, but did not bother us with talk. He saw that we were busy. When our first hunger was satisfied I turned to him:

"My friend, it is a long story, a long and bitter story." And then I told him all that had happened to us since he and the Sturgeon left us on the shore of Lac Vieux Désert. But he did not seem really interested till I reached that part of the narrative where we fell in with Red Beard. At that point he leaned forward and his eyes never left mine as I related the circumstances of our capture, the plundering of our camp, and the way we were left to die in the wilderness.

"One doesn't turn a dog out like that," was his only comment.

And then I described our wanderings, as best

I could, our days and nights of wretchedness, cold and hunger. Now and then, when I stopped for breath, Johnny would break in.

While we were so excitedly relating our adventure Nah-ma, the Sturgeon, arrived and beheld us with amazement. And then we began all over again and told our story a second time, and he sat and listened with more rapt attention than he would have given any story-teller in the village where he was born. Finally, we paused and asked:

"This old Red Beard—do you know him?"

The two Indians looked at each other.

"Yes, we know him," they said significantly.

"Where is his post?"

"On Lac du Flambeau."

"Good, Johnny," I said "we shall see him again."

"Come soon the day," was the boy's reply, in a tone that was cold and full of hate.

"But now you must tell us all about yourselves," we said to our friends of the wigwam; How does it come that you are here in the edge of the Wisconsin country?"

And then the Sturgeon who was a ready talker told us how they made the return journey from Lac Désert to their village in three days; how

they had remained a couple of weeks with their families, then had made up two small packs and set out on foot along the west branch of the On-to-nog-on to this region where we had found them,—a country in which they had hunting rights by a long standing tribal arrangement. They had hardly any supplies with them, but had counted on visiting our post a little later to stock up again. They had been in camp a month now, and already numerous skins were drying around their wigwam.

"Say, I'm hungry again," said Johnny. "Ta-ga-we-nin-ne, where is the meat kettle?"

He helped himself generously, and I, too, began a meal all over again. Then we stretched out before the fire, wrapped in the blankets of our hosts. The feeling of a full stomach, of dryness and warmth, and a chance to lie down at our ease, proved too much for us and we were soon asleep.

We woke late in the afternoon, ate another meal, put on some new moccasins and leggins with which the Indians supplied us, and went out to stretch ourselves and walk about. It was a raw, disagreeable day, but we were suddenly full of life again.

"Well, Jim, what's your plan now?" asked Johnny, as we strolled off through the timber.

"Get back to Lac Désert as soon as we can, rent, buy or make a canoe, and then go to pay a visit to old Red Beard at Lake Flambeau."

Johnny gave a whoop, bent over with his hands to the ground for a handspring, slipped from weakness and fell his length in the leaves.

"Yes, Johnny, we'll go to Lac du Flambeau, hunt out old Red Beard's post and present him a bill for damages. And I think we'll collect it, too."

"That's the thing! Present the bill and collect it on the spot. He stole four good packs, and all our camp stuff and valuables; and when I dream at night I see the poor old canoe wrinkling and twisting over the fire. *Sacré*—it is quite a bill!"

That night by the fire in the wigwam I outlined my plan in detail. We would return to our post as soon as possible, there outfit a second time, if the *cache* of supplies was undisturbed, then proceed to square accounts with old Red Beard at Lac du Flambeau. We should need a guide through the woods to our post; we should need a guide to the post on Lac du Flambeau. I looked at the two Indians; would one or both of them go with us?

For a time neither of the men said a word, and I perceived that I had asked too much.

"Of course, you have no quarrel with the villain who plundered us, and I have no right to ask you to assist us against him. But will you show us the way to Lac Désert?"

It was too dim in the lodge to catch the look on the Sturgeon's face, but I heard unwavering resolution in his voice and words.

"My young friend, you treated the Hunter and me like men on the long On-to-nog-on portage, and now you act and talk as one man ought to act and talk to another. Ta-ga-we-nin-ne and I have already counseled together. When you and the Cheerful One,—that was their name for Johnny, have eaten and slept and rested your fill, we'll guide you through the big woods to your post. As to our quarrel with Red Beard—it is one that's deeper even than yours."

"What! Have you ever come in contact with him?"

"Have we? You have told us your story; would you care to hear ours? Then listen!"

"Years ago, when Ta-ga-we-nin-ne and I were new to the ways of traders, we were camped together with our wives and children in this same lake region of the Wisconsin at the beginning of winter. We had pushed our way up the On-to-nog-on with much hard work, and were looking

forward to good hunting here in this game country. We did not have much outfit, but we counted on stocking up at the post on Lac du Flambeau in mid-winter.

"The autumn passed, bad weather and snow came; it was the month of snowshoes, *ah-gim-me-ka-we kee-zis,* and cold began to be felt even in the wigwams, for we needed blankets and many things. Ta-ga-we-nin-ne and I made up two packs of furs, choice skins of beaver, marten, and mink, and then we set out with a toboggan for the post. It was a good three days' trip as straight as one might go; we arrived worn and with our belts pulled tight, for we had left most of the food behind in the lodges for the squaws and the children.

"Red Beard, as you call him, received us like relatives come home from a long trip; he gave us food, much food, and too much firewater, which was our undoing. He asked us to drink with him, and we did not refuse; *squit-ta-wa-bo* tasted good to us after our hard journey through the forest. We drank once, twice, three times with him, and then it was not very clear to us what happened. Some three days later we found ourselves still hanging around the post, and our peltries were sold. But we could not discover what we had

bought. We protested to Red Beard, and he kicked us out, saying we had bought a gallon of rum apiece with our bales of furs, and he was not to blame if we intended to buy blankets and provisions for our squaws and children. We asked him then to advance us credit for what we wanted, but he only laughed at us, and drove us away. Trade was good with him just then, and we were strangers.

"We made our way back through the forest to our camp. I don't know now what we lived on to make the trip, but I do know that it was cold, and the snow deep. It was a sorry home-coming, and our wives taunted us for fools, and the children cried. Another moon, maybe more, went by and our condition grew desperate. Ta-ga-we-nin-ne and I made up two more small bales of furs, the culls of what we had caught earlier, and some recent catches, and again we set off for Lac du Flambeau. We had one gun with us; one we left behind at the camp.

"We spread out our furs before Red Beard, and he laughed at us. He offered us rum, but we refused and asked for blankets, powder, shot and flour, asked with tears and supplications. He flew into a rage, claiming that we were already indebted to him from the previous account. We

denied it, and he called his men. Ta-ga-we-ninne clubbed his gun, and I fought with my knife, but we were too weak from lack of food and the hardships of the trip, and they drove us out.

"We went away to the forest and camped and nursed our hate. We could not go back empty-handed again. At last we decided to go to an Indian village a day's trip away, where we hoped to find somebody who could help us. The weather had turned bad, and we were two days on the road. When we got there we found the camp deserted."

"That was terrible," I interjected. "That was worse than the way he treated us."

"Listen to the end," remarked Ta-ga-we-ninne, "there is more to tell."

"From the deserted Indian camp we turned our steps homeward, an awful journey. A blizzard raged for two days, and we had to camp to save our lives. And later we lost our way in the blinding remnant of the storm, and it was full ten days before we came in sight of our lodges. And we were too late. Two of my children were dead of cold and hunger, and Ta-ga-we-nin-ne's wife was gone. She had taken the gun and set out to try to kill something just as the blizzard came on; she had not returned. She never re-

turned. The rest of us survived that winter, but we shall never forget it."

Johnny and I had listened spellbound, and we were almost in tears when the recital ended.

"Now, my friends," said Ta-ga-we-nin-ne, "when you are ready to start we'll guide you back to your camp on Lac Désert. And from Lac Désert we'll show you the way to the Flambeau country. We, too, would like to see Red Beard again."

We lay over one day at the Indians' camp in the forest to rest up, and they made use of the time to visit and arrange their traps. Then they *cached* their stuff, put a bark sign with their totem mark upon it on their wigwam, and were ready. They seemed to think that everything would be safe till their return, unless, as Nah-ma said, some white man should find the place.

It was the eighth of November when we left their camp, and by noon of the tenth we came in sight of Lac Désert. Our guides seemed to know the route as if it were a plain trail, but as far as we could tell there was no path, or blaze even, to show them the way. They simply k he direction by that wonderful instinct was so

keenly developed in the Indian, and with absolute confidence and certainty they threaded the forests, avoided the swamps, and zig-zagged back and forth over the creeks.

We approached the site of our cabin with some foreboding, wondering whether we should be greeted by a heap of ruins, but there through the trees we saw it, silent, lonesome, but standing. Johnny, who was more interested in his underground *cache* than in the cabin, went to see how things were there, while I marched straight to the door. What I saw surprised me; the door was hanging by one hinge, broken and battered to pieces. We had had callers in our absence sure enough. Johnny soon came up and reported that all was well with the stuff in the *cache* so far as he could see. We now examined the cabin, but discovered no further damage. It was quite evident that some one had been concerned only to get in, and then finding the house empty, had left it in disgust.

"I'll bet it was old Red Beard who knocked that door in," said Johnny in an ugly tone; "he first sent us that warning, and then came with his cutthroats to see if we had left. He must have been delighted with the success of his threat."

"All very likely, Johnny, and he was no doubt

on his way home when luck threw us in his way. Well, we'll have to add the value of the door to the bill when we present it."

We now opened the *cache* and brought up the goods and supplies in order to air and dry them thoroughly before we set out on our vendetta. Johnny built a roaring fire in the fireplace, and it was not long before we were snug and cozy within our own four walls again. That afternoon the two Indians went out into the big forest to the north along the On-to-nog-on trail to look for game, for we wanted a good supply of meat to take with us on our expedition. Johnny and I worked over our outfit and planned the equipment we should need. Late that night the Indians returned with a gigantic buck, and thus the meat question was settled.

The next day Johnny volunteered to go part way around the lake to where a widowed squaw and her half-grown children had their wigwam to see if he could rent or buy their canoe. He took a small pack of goods with him for barter. While he was gone we at the cabin worked hard cutting up the deer and drying it over a slow fire. Johnny came back that night with a canoe, and so our transportation was assured.

The next day we spent drying more venison,

and in stowing our goods and surplus supplies in the secret *cache* again as a precaution against visitors. On the thirteenth we set out.

The weather was chilly and raw, though not freezing yet; but we knew we had need to hurry. Our invasion of the enemy's country would proceed better by water than on foot, but whatever the weather we intended to settle our score with old Red Beard and his gang.

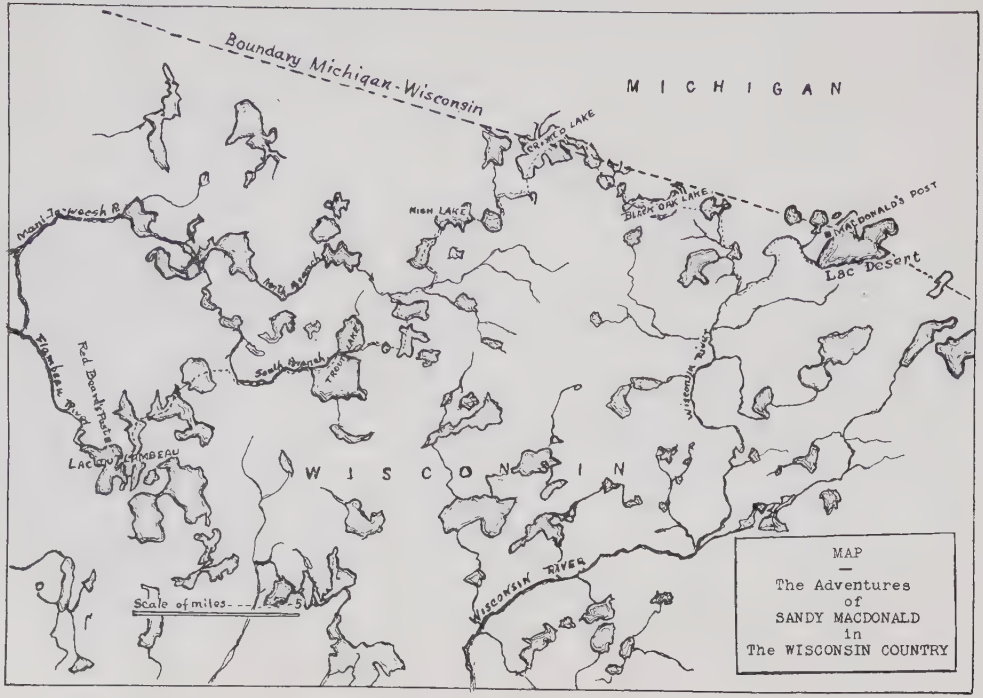
Our route was the same Johnny and I had followed on our ill-fated excursion, only with four paddlers rather than two, and no goods to pack over the portages, we made better time. On the second day we passed the island where Red Beard had marooned us, and from there on the course was new. But the Indians never hesitated once, though it had been some years since they had traversed the region before us.

Our way for the next day or so took us through a maze of lakes, creeks and connecting portages. We passed from High Lake, the scene of our disaster, to Fish Trap Lake, thence by way of Wide Creek to the North Branch of the Man-i-to-weesh River. At this point we turned back, ascended the stream to White Sand Lake, and then by portages and small lakes gained Trout Lake, a noble sheet of water. As the bird flies, we were now

only about fifteen miles from Lac du Flambeau, but it took us a whole day on the roundabout route we were forced to make.

We quitted Trout Lake by the South Branch of the Man-i-to-weesh, down which we paddled, I should judge, some five miles. The Indians remembered a portage there west to Swamp Lake which we followed. And then from Swamp Lake we journeyed by Sand Lake to Lake Po-ke-gama, which took us almost to Lake Flambeau. We were now in the enemy's country, and our caution was that of a party of hostile savages on the war-path. It had been long years since our men had donned war paint and dug up the hatchet in real warfare, but they began to show the excitement of the war trail again.

At their suggestion we made a blind camp back in the forest at the lower end of the lake, and Johnny and I lay by for a day while they went off with the canoe to spy out the land. They did not return till late in the night, but you may imagine that Johnny and I rolled out of our blankets quickly enough to hear their report. We poked up the fire and soon set before them a kettle of steaming tea and some stewed venison, and they were not the kind to disregard the creature comforts of life. If any wild animals of the forest


Boundary Michigan-Wisconsin
MICHIGAN
WISCONSIN
Mont Tawoosh R.
Flambeau River
Red Boom Point
LAC COURTE OREILLES
North Branch
South Branch
Trout Lake
High Lake
Round Lake
Black Oak Lake
Wisconsin River
MacDonald's Post
Lac Desert
Scale of miles
5
MAP
—
The Adventures
of
SANDY MACDONALD
in
The WISCONSIN COUNTRY

were about that night, they must have wondered much at that group around the midnight camp fire. The men talked while they ate.

They had made the little portage from Lake Po-ke-ga-ma, they said, and then cruised down the eastern side of Lake Flambeau on the look-out for some straggling hunter or camp to talk with. Near the southern end they were lucky enough to meet an old Indian whose wigwam was near-by. They introduced themselves as trappers from the lower Wisconsin and strangers to the region, who were on their way to the trading post. They accompanied this palaver with a gift of tobacco, and the old man's tongue was loosened. Whatever gossip of the lake he knew, he was only too willing to share. Old Red Beard still limped as he used to, and he was no more generous than ever. Although his was the only post within a range of sixty miles, and all the Indians of the surrounding region had to trade with him, still they hated him and feared him. There was nothing he would not do,—cheat, plunder, murder even! Had they heard? Not very long ago he had come back from a marauding expedition with four fine bales of goods which he had stolen from a couple of young white traders whom he surprised at night. The three men who

were with him had not been very close-mouthed about the affair. From what they said they had not only robbed the traders, but left them bound and helpless, without food, gun, canoe, or anything, on a lone island in some distant lake. What was that but murder? And Red Beard's men now? O, two of them were about to go, maybe they had already gone, with a canoe-load of goods to another Company post on the Chippewa River toward the Mi-chi See-pe country. The other man always stayed with Red Beard; he was his right-hand assistant. Like master, like man. If there ever was a villain, this devil's helper was one.

All this and more the talkative old man told them before they left him. From that point they paddled around to take a look at the trading post to see if their remembrance of its location was correct. Yes, there it stood just as when they saw it last, a solid log building serving as storehouse and dwelling combined, and near-by another structure which was bunkhouse for the employees when they were there in force.

It was long after midnight when we again rolled up in our blankets under our lean-to shelter, but we had our plan of attack worked out.

We lay in concealment till the middle of the

next afternoon, then set out and in the twilight rounded the northern end of the lake a mile or so above the post. We ran into a cove, pulled our canoe into a thicket, and made a hasty camp; the two Indians disappeared like stealthy shadows in the forest. Johnny and I huddled in our blankets, munched cold venison, and waited. At first we talked in whispers; finally we grew sleepy and dropped off. Possibly we had slept three or four hours when a gentle shake awakened us; Nah-ma had returned for us. Everything was all right, only the entire crew was still at the post. We might have a little extra work to do on that account, but the advantage was with us just the same.

We ran our canoe into the water and moved down the shore to within some few hundred yards of the post. There we beached it at a place we marked well, and Nah-ma gave a call which was like that of some night bird. An answer came from near-by and soon the Hunter joined us. He reported that three men were asleep in the bunk-house, but that Red Beard was up yet, sitting by his fire and playing a fiddle. We listened, and sure enough, across the little clearing came the unmusical notes of a violin.

"What's he playing?" asked Johnny, with eager

interest, and I had to laugh, for it was almost funny.

"Johnny, it's 'The Campbells are Coming,' but he's going to change his tune in a minute."

Chapter Ten

WE APPROACHED the trading post like so many shadows and listened. Red Beard was industriously sawing away as if he had within him an artist's soul. The difficulty now was to get him to the door before he suspected anything was wrong, but we had fixed up a plan for that. Johnny and the Sturgeon went and stationed themselves by the bunkhouse as a precaution, though we did not expect any trouble there—not yet. The Hunter and I took care of the store. We were expecting a dog to bark from somewhere, but not a sound greeted us; nothing but that cracked fiddle in the middle of the great wilderness.

I halted by the corner of the house, and the Hunter knocked boldly on the door; he waited a moment and the music continued. He knocked again, once, twice, three times. Red Beard stopped and called out gruffly:

"Who is it?"

"*Nish-a-nau-ba, ne-to-an-je-bah,*—an Indian, I came across from the other side."

"What do you want?"

"I am hungry—I want meat. I have furs—I want trade."

"If you are hungry, hunt up some friend's wigwam. If you want trade, come back in the daytime."

He went on with his fiddle playing.

We waited a few minutes, then Ta-ga-we-ninne began to pound on the door again.

"Open, O trader. I have been long on the trail and am hungry."

The music stopped, and we heard an oath. The Indian took advantage of the pause to appeal still further.

"I cannot wait till morning; when dawn comes I must be far along on the forest road toward my wigwam where my children are starving. I have fine furs to trade—"

The oaths continued, but soon we heard the man's heavy tread coming out into the storehouse. We crowded close to the door like two waiting panthers on a deer trail. Through the chinks of the shutter the light streamed out, and soon we heard him fumbling with the bar, then the door opened and we leaped in. But as quick as we were, he was still quicker; he jumped back and reached for a gun which lay handy. However, we were prepared for that, and did not give him any time

to make use of the weapon. We were on him in an instant. The Sturgeon said later that the noise we made was like the falling of great trees in the forest.

It was a bear-like tussle, and Red Beard made a valiant fight. Why it did not occur to him to call for help I cannot see. We expected he would; that is why Johnny and the Sturgeon were waiting by the bunkhouse door. But he uttered not a sound—just struck, and kicked, and bit, and butted. At last, however, we choked and beat him into submission. The light of the guttering candle which he had put on a shelf before opening the door was so poor that he had not recognized me till I knelt by him to bind his hands. Then he gave a groan as if he had seen a ghost.

"Yes, I've come back to haunt you," I said venomously.

We bound him hand and foot and gagged him as well. Then we went out to counsel with the others. Should we drag out the crew, or save that part till the last? We decided to make a clean sweep of the business now that we were in it, and capture the men while our blood was up. So far they had been as quiet as mice, but the bunkhouse was some yards away from the store, and the sound of our scrimmage with Red Beard

had not reached them. We tried the door gently, but it was fastened securely.

Johnny and the Sturgeon had evolved a plan of attack while they had stood cooling their toes in the darkness, and they were quick to put it in operation. While we were rolling a torch of birch bark and lighting it by Red Beard's candle, they brought up a cedar log from somewhere; a log fifteen feet long and eight or ten inches in diameter. Were we ready?—All right, we must be prepared to jump in when the door fell. Ta-ga-we-nin-ne and I picked up our guns and held the torch over our heads; Johnny and the Sturgeon put their guns by the door, then backed up a piece and came at the door with the battering ram. There was a crash, the door flew from its hinges with a clatter, and in we went.

I have often laughed when I think how dazed Johnny and I were the time old Red Beard wrapped us up in our tent that night on the island in High Lake, but our surprise was nothing compared with that of the three half-breeds who sat up so quickly in their bunks at our onslaught that they bumped their heads. And the way they blinked in the torchlight was like an owl suddenly brought out from a hole into daylight.

They were too paralyzed with amazement to

utter a word, but we made each one tumble out of his warm nest and stand while we tied his hands, and then march outdoors where we finished by tying his feet. At last we had the three of them lying like so many dead rabbits there in a row, while the Sturgeon guarded them with his gun. It was a cold night and their teeth were soon rattling vigorously.

We now went in to settle accounts with Red Beard, and the score was a heavy one. We removed the gag from his mouth, so that he might talk if he had anything to say. Next, we proceeded to look things over, and almost the first thing that met our gaze was a bale of our own goods dumped in one corner. We laid it out carefully, and three other pieces quite as heavy.

"That's what you stole from us in goods," I said, as if checking off a list.

"Next, the cooking outfit."

Johnny soon had that sorted out from the hardware in stock.

"Now, a gun—he carried off ours."

Johnny picked up Red Beard's weapon, a handsome rifle.

"Now, food supplies, and be generous. You remember those days that followed his visit, Johnny."

And Johnny remembered, and sorted out whatever was eatable,—bags of lyed corn, strips of smoked bacon, tea, salt, and other things that appealed to him,—stuff that Old Red Beard and his men had packed and portaged and canoed in across five hundred miles of wilderness and water. I turned to the trader.

"There is more yet. You once robbed these Indians of their winter's catch of furs. You refused them food, and their wigwam people starved and died. They shall pick out what they wish as some sort of pay—anything but your accursed rum."

I motioned Ta-ga-we-nin-ne to the task. It took him half an hour to make up his outfit, but it was a ninety pound bale when he was done, counting in the powder and shot. Then he went out to relieve the Sturgeon, who took his turn at the stores, where he, too, made up a bulky pack. We now carried our stuff down to the lake shore preparatory to loading it in our canoe. It looked as if our mission was accomplished. Still it was not quite.

I called my helpers to me.

"Men, I put a question to you, and I want your honest answer. Shall we burn down the post and wipe it out absolutely? Johnny?

"I vote to burn it down."

I turned to the Hunter.

"And you?"

"I vote to burn it down."

"And you?"

"I vote," said the Sturgeon, "to burn it down, and the *matchee man-i-tou,* that old Red Devil in it."

"No, he and the men shall not be harmed; we'll just let them know what a tramp through the wilderness means. It is sixty miles to the nearest American Fur Company post. Let them make it if they can. But we'll burn the house. It is time they felt the law of the forest in some way upon them."

We lost no time now. We dragged the four men away from the buildings, covered them up, each in a blanket taken from the store, then returned to the last part of our task. We knocked doors and boxes to pieces with axes; we heaped up kindlings in the bunkhouse and the store; we chopped their canoes to pieces for bark with which to start the fire. Then we smashed in a few small casts of brandy, and liberally soaked everything.

All this time Red Beard has been lying ungagged out by the side of his cutthroat followers, and

he made the night hideous with his vile oaths. But when he perceived that we were actually getting ready to set fire to the post his mood changed and he began to beg piteously that we spare this final destruction. He choked and cried and entreated; he promised to do a thousand things to make up for what he had done; he acknowledged his crimes; he begged our forgiveness. But we had no mercy now,—we were consumed with an eagerness to destroy, and his words fell, for the most part, on deaf ears. Only once did I deign to say anything to him.

"You whine and grovel and beg for mercy, but when have you ever shown any pity yourself? The story of the fur trade for twenty years in these parts is full of your crimes. You have waged war on every man who didn't belong to your cutthroat Company, and tried to discourage all opposition by murder, plunder and trickery. See what you did to us! Fell upon us while we slept, robbed us of everything with which to sustain life. Then, because you hated to kill us in cold blood, you left us bound and helpless on an island, hoping we should die of cold and hunger."

"O have mercy," he groaned.

I turned away in disgust, but Ta-ga-we-nin-ne who stood by took up my words.

"You beg and cringe and cry for mercy. Do you remember how years ago you sold me and my companion whiskey instead of goods till we became fools and parted with all our handsome peltries for nothing? Do you remember how we came back and begged you for food and blankets for our wives and children who were dying of cold and hunger in the wigwams back in the forest? And how you laughed? We cried and begged and grovelled in the dust before you, but you derided us and told us to go back and starve. We went away and lived; but by your villainy death came to our wigwams once, twice, three times. And now you beg for pity! You!"

The Indian was fairly beside himself with fury and almost before I knew it he had whipped out a knife. Red Beard gave a moan, for he thought he saw his doom bending over him. I laid my hand on Ta-ga-we-nin-ne's arm.

"Let him live, my friend. Let him live till he crawls away like some pest-stricken animal and dies in the wilderness. Better for the wolves to pull him down somewhere on the long trail than for you to redden your knife with such blood as his."

The Indian turned without a word and returned to the commotion around the cabins.

"We are all ready," yelled Johnny. "Shall we touch 'em off?"

"Give me the torch."

He handed me the roll of birch bark which was burning with a smoky, oily glare, and I went into the store and held it to the kindlings. They burned like tinder. Then I went into the bunkhouse and set fire there. It was hardly a moment before the two structures were roaring, seething masses of flame and smoke. Our vengeance was satisfied at last.

Nah-ma now brought up the canoe and we loaded in our goods. At the very last moment a little compassion stirred within me and I went back to the helpless gang lying in their bankets.

"There on the ground is an open claspknife. When daylight comes some one of you can wriggle around enough to get it in his teeth, and if he is clever he may be able to saw free somebody's hands. But maybe you'll get free without such thoughtfulness from me. When once you are loose, you'd better get hotfoot out of here."

By the light of the burning buildings we paddled away into the night. We made the portage to Lake Po-ke-ga-ma and embarked again just as the dawn began to appear in the east, but we pressed on and did not make camp for breakfast

till we were at the end of the portage to Sand Lake. There we stopped for a couple of hours, and then went on again. We did not fear any pursuit, there was no one to pursue, but we were anxious to get out of the accursed country. All that day we traveled hard, talking little; what we had been through weighed down upon us. We crossed from Swamp Lake to the Man-i-to-weesh, thence east to Trout Lake, and finally passed up a creek to Clear Lake, and so on to White Sand Lake, where we camped. Not till we sat by our genial fire that night, with a good supper before us and the prospects of a springy balsam bed and a warm blanket soon to follow, did we get our spirits back and fall to chatting and laughing, as we used to do nights on the On-to-nog-on trail.

A long night's rest brought us back to ourselves completely, and we paddled on the next day, making good time. The weather had changed from raw to cold; a little ice was even beginning to form at night in quiet water, and the cold north wind was spitting snow. We had need of haste, if we did not want to get caught in a freeze-up half way back to Lac Désert.

We made the traverse of High Lake again, and then on to the lakes beyond. As we came

into this region the Indians explained to us what we had probably done in our wanderings in those unhappy days of ours. We had started to the east or southeast, had reached Goose Lake possibly, then bearing to the left, had got into the swamps and finally lost our course entirely, so that at last we headed north or northwest, rather than east. That course, which was almost doubling back on our tracks, brought us into the network of the lake country further north, where we were when we came upon their trap line. Since we were not far from that very same region now, they proposed that we push on to the north end of Nee-bish Lake and allow them to *cache* their supplies there. It would save them a long, hard bit of transportation when they should start back to the On-to-nog-on.

I was only too glad to give them such a lift, for I knew by experience that it was easier to tote stuff through the wilderness by canoe than by back. After advising with Johnny I made up another pack from our own four pieces, which I gave them to pay for their services as guides and warriors on our expedition. They protested against this, saying that they were not working for pay when it came to settling scores with Red Beard. However, we urged them so hard that

they finally yielded, asking only that we allow them to do a little hunting for us before they started home.

At last, a day and a half from Lake Nee-bish, we came in sight of home,—a home that we were looking forward to with pleasure now that winter was about to settle down. We found everything in good shape, cabin and *cache,* and it was not long before we had a rousing fire in the chimney to add to the cheer and comfort of the place. Even Ta-ga-we-nin-ne and Nah-ma reluctantly agreed that a house like ours had some advantages over a wigwam as a permanent structure in which to live—some, but not many. This was much for an Indian to admit.

The next two days we spent in getting things in order, and the Indians hunted, and finished the tying of our fish-net which we had worked upon at odd spells, but had not completed. They had the good luck to kill a moose,—though luck is hardly the word to use in speaking of their hunting, for I had seen on the On-to-nog-on portage that their skill was almost beyond belief —and the meat proved a welcome addition to our food supply. We gave them more than enough to last them on the trip back to their hunting camp, and on the twenty-sixth of November they

left us, carrying a few traps with which to visit some beaver colonies we had discovered on our way home.

Our two Indians were hardly gone before we were anxious to try the net which they had helped us finish. Everybody had told us that there was an abundance of fish in the lake, and we had hoped to make a catch of *o-do-nee-bee,* or tullibee, but we had let the month of November, which is the time when they are running, slip by, and now we would have to fall back upon ordinary lake fish. Because of the fact that we had at once returned the canoe, all operations necessarily had to proceed at some disadvantage. However, we constructed a raft of cedar logs and were able with it to get out onto the lake a little.

The very last day before the ice locked up everything for the winter Johnny pushed out with the raft, swung one end of the net over, buoying it up with cedar floats, while I stood on a fallen treetop and slowly paid it out. It was an awkward procedure, but by main strength Johnny was able to drag the net over quite a space of deep water before be beached his unwieldy craft on the shore again. We lost no time in pulling in. What a motley collection of pike, pickerel, bass, perch, and suckers, greeted our gaze! It

was not a "miraculous draught of fishes" in the Scripture sense of the word, but still the most wonderful haul we had ever seen, and the flopping and the splashing made sweet music for our ears.

We immediately proceeded to hang our fish up by the tail on poles to freeze, and as the weather was growing rapidly colder it was not long before our entire catch of three days was taken care of.

On the first day of December winter which had seemed so strangely unwilling to invade our wilderness came in dead earnest, with much snow, and by the middle of the month, lake and forest were tucked under a blanket of white. For the next few months we knew we should have to keep close to our post.

Chapter Eleven

JOHNNY and I were not lonesome even when winter closed in upon us, for we fished and hunted by day, and read and studied at night. Johnny had lugged all the way from Mackinaw in his dunnage a dog-eared paper volume which he now brought out quite shamefacedly, saying that somebody had given it to him and recommended it as an interesting story. Perhaps I would read it aloud nights? I took the battered piece of literature and examined it with some curiosity. It was Saint-Pierre's *Paul and Virginia,* and bore the imprint of some Quebec publisher and the date 1803. Evidently it was a cheap Canadian reprint of that touching French romance which had in some way got across to this side of the ocean. From the way it was worn and soiled I imagined it had followed many a *voyageur* and trader to his winter camp in the forest.

I looked the book over and then proposed that we make it a text for both of us to study. I had a fairly good reading knowledge of French, but my accent had too much of the Scotch burr in it to get me very far, and it needed training. On

the other hand, Johnny was French, and possessed a good command of his mother tongue. He could be eloquent at times, as I had observed more than once, but he could not read. I said to him that I would help him to read if he would drill me in pronunciation. *"Il est très difficile de refaire un Ecossais,* It is extremely difficult to make a Scotchman over," he answered with a grin, but he accepted my offer just the same. But I am afraid he was right about the Scotchman; it takes more than a little to change him.

And so that winter I was both schoolmaster and pupil. Whatever smoothness of French accent I ever possessed I trace back to Johnny's efforts on the shores of old Lac Désert. And Johnny's progress? I think I may say with some pride that I was a good teacher, for before spring he could read *Paul and Virginia* as well as I.

A few days later Mex-i-nin-ne and another Indian came in from their winter camp with two fine packs of furs to pay on the credit account they had incurred when we first arrived. They did a little extra trading, too, and lamented that food in their wigwams was running low. The deer seemed to have abandoned the country or had retired to some remote place in the lake country. We proposed that they take some of

our fish, for we had a great supply, and when they started back they had as much of our "frozen cordwood," to use Johnny's term for it, as they could carry.

Johnny returned with the chief and his companion to their camp. We thought it a good time to collect further on our credits, and at the same time keep our memory fragrant among them by judiciously distributing a few carrots of tobacco and other gifts. The Indian is honest, but he likes to have his friendship cultivated in visible ways. From Mex-i-nin-ne's camp it was Johnny's plan to go on to Lac Brulé, calling at a few lodges on the way, and then come back by the regular trail to our lake. If all went well we should eat our Christmas dinner together. In fact, he hoped to be back in time to cook it himself—that would insure a good one!

I stood by the edge of the shore and watched the party as it skirted the ice to the south. A half mile away Johnny turned about and waved his cap at me. I felt a little ashamed then of the lonesomeness which seemed to weigh upon me in some strange way, and I immediately set to work to drive away my depression of spirit. We had cut a quantity of wood for our fireplace, but we had not yet brought it to the cabin: Here

was a job ready at hand, and for several hours I hauled up the wood on a sled which we had manufactured for the purpose. Then night came on, and I built up the fire in Johnny's fine old fireplace, cooked a supper which at best was but a poor one, read and re-read a chapter in *Paul and Virginia,* and turned into my bunk early. The wind roared and howled through the forest all night long; I could not help wondering in what sheltering wigwam Johnny had spread his blanket.

Two days went by, and the weather changed from bad to worse. It now snowed and blew constantly, and the cold became more severe. I worked away at the wood, drawing up what we had cut, and cutting more. I was not very skillful with the axe, and my chopping resembled beaver cuttings. Still, I put in the time. The twentieth of December came—in five days more, or sooner, Johnny would be back. Well, I should be glad to see him.

He and I had talked frequently of the possibility of Red Beard's coming to visit us again at the head of a gang of ruffians, but we had agreed it was highly improbable. There were two or three reasons: In the first place, we reckoned that he would have a tight squeak of it to save his old

skin, and that, in any case, he would not have much fight left in him. And then, if he and his party had been the ones who visited the cabin in our absence, he would think we had established our post somewhere else and would not know now where to strike. No, we did not expect to see Red Beard in our country again. And he was the only unwelcome visitor we feared.

Late in the afternoon of the twenty-third of December I was working at something in the cabin, when the door opened suddenly and three Indians stepped in. By the light of the open door I got a good look at them and I was not reassured any, for two of them were the thieves we had encountered on the On-to-nog-on trail. I suspected trouble, but had presence of mind enough to keep my fears to myself. I handed out some tobacco to feel out the situation.

"Where are you from, my friends?" I asked with seeming indifference.

"We come from the Me-nom-i-nee country for trade."

"How has the hunting been?"

They did not have any furs with them, unless they had left them outside, which was not probable, and I did not intend to open any credit with them.

"The hunting has been good; we have several bales of furs in our wigwams, and more will come."

"If you came for trade, why did you not bring the furs you have on hand? Nothing so delights a trader as the sight of furs."

The stranger, whom I did not know, gave an insolent laugh and replied, "Give us some fire-water, then we can talk better."

"I have no *squit-ta-wa-bo,*—I do not buy furs with rum."

"Young trader, your tongue is forked."

I have never been noted for having a good temper, and my next move was a quick one, quicker than the speaker anticipated evidently, for before he or the others could act I had my hands on my rifle.

"There's the door—get out quick!"

"But we will die of cold and hunger. It is a blizzard outside."

"Once more I say get out, and get out soon!"

I swept them out with my rifle cocked, then warned them away from the cabin. They went, somewhat taken aback by my resolute stand. It was bitter cold outside, and the icy gusts of the wind almost made me regret my harshness; but when I remembered that they had probably come

plotting mischief, I grew cruel again. I did not believe they had any guns with them,—not more than one anyway, and I did not think they would make use of it. But if it came to shooting, my position was as good as theirs.

They withdrew to the shelter of a thicket a few hundred yards distant and started a fire, and I saw them breaking boughs to make a shelter. There they huddled like shivering dogs by the blaze, talking together.

An hour or so passed and it began to grow dusk, and they still sat there. My conscience pricked me a little, for I didn't want them to freeze. I went to the door of the cabin and called out:

"*On-das*—Come here! Send up one man; I will give you something to eat."

I hastily got together some food, such as it was, and wrapping it in an old tarpaulin I went to the door. One of the men from the L'Anse trail came up. As I handed him the bundle he said meaningly:

"I do not forget, my friend. I cannot tell what will happen this night, but a wise fox never sleeps with the dog on the trail."

He went back to the fire, and I pondered on his words. They were evidently meant as a warn-

ing, but against what? Or were they a threat? Anyway, it was well to take precautions. I loaded two other guns and laid them handy; then I barred the door and battened the windows. But nothing happened during the night, a night which seemed even longer than those Johnny and I had spent in our wanderings in the lake country.

When morning came I cautiously reconnoitered and saw the Indians still squatting around the fire. They had evidently not thought best to make a night attack. They hung around their camp till nearly noon, and then disappeared into the forest down the shore toward the outlet. I waited an hour or so, but saw nothing further of them. Taking my gun and a pail I stepped out, drew a few long breaths in the fresh air, and started to go to the spring for some water.

I had hardly turned my back on the cabin, at least had not gone more than fifty yards, when I heard a yell and looked back just in time to see the three Indians rush around the corner of the cabin and disappear inside. O fool of a fool that I was! They had been too clever for me. Why had I not thought to lock the door behind me!

In a twinkling they had slammed the door shut, and I knew from the noise they were barricading it. But in that moment I had an idea which

raised my sinking hopes; perhaps a white man's cunning was equal to theirs, after all. I ran back to the door before they should have time to find the guns, and taking the piece of chain which hung from the latch hole, I noiselessly hooked it over a big spike that we had driven into a log for that purpose. It was our way of temporarily fastening the door from without since Red Beard's damage to it on his visit. My guests were now prisoners, for the windows were securely battened and, anyway, they were too small to let a man through.

I was thinking rapidly, and my scheme appeared so good to me that I gave a war-whoop of exultation. I was answered from within; the Indians were not worrying any, for they considered themselves masters of the situation. But just the same I had them! The door was hooked on the outside; the windows were so well covered that it would take them sometime to open them with the means at their disposal. And while they might find the guns, they would not have a chance to use them, I hoped. I had left a roaring fire in the fireplace; here was my cue—I would smoke them out. As I thought of it I actually shouted in glee, and I heard one of the Indians say, "He is crazy! Hear him laugh!"

I hurried to put my plan into execution. Creeping quietly to the back of the cabin, I took a pole that lay there and leaned it against the sloping roof by the side of the chimney; and then taking two flat slabs, such as we had used for curbing in the *cache,* I tossed them up on the roof. It was only the work of a moment to climb up after them. I quickly tore up a section of the bark roofing, laid it over the outlet of the chimney and weighted it down with the flat slabs. I laughed again in a wild glee which must have sounded wild indeed to the captives below.

I don't know what they were intent upon when they first got in—finding a keg of liquor, I presume; but as the acrid smoke of the green hardwood logs began to fill the room they thought only of one thing, namely, to get out. They made a rush for the door and found it was closed better than they knew. Then for the first time their plight dawned upon them, and they set up a terrible yelling and howling. But I was not inclined to listen in pity. My feelings had been so worked up during the last twenty-four hours that I was ready to stand by and see them suffocate. I had no doubt they would have done the same to me if they had thought of it.

For ten minutes, maybe longer, they stood the

ordeal pretty well. I later discovered that they had thrown some blankets on the fire in an endeavor to smother it, but this remedy did not last long. Then as the smoke grew denser they began to beat upon the door, first with their fists, then with stools and pieces of wood. But they were choked and panic stricken, and only got in one another's way. At last, however, and lucky for them, one furious blow, better aimed than their others, sprung the planks so that the heavy hasp which held the chain bent and broke, and they were able to get the door open. It was their salvation, though I stood outside and could easily have killed them all as they came tumbling out.

The war had now become nothing but a funny show, at least one would have thought so if he could have seen my savages rolling in the snow, coughing and wheezing, rubbing their eyes, and trying to get some good air again into their smoke-filled lungs. As for me, who was the author of their undoing, I laughed till I cried. Then I quickly knocked the cap off the chimney, and devoted myself in real earnest to my callers. With my gun ready in my hand, I tried my best to berate them into some sort of appreciation of their behavior, but while they cried most distressingly over my words it was not from repentance.

When I grew tired of preaching to them I drove them off into the forest.

My next concern was to set the cabin to rights and air it out. No special damage had been done beyond the two half-burned blankets by the fireplace, but the smell of smoke was very evident. I opened the window shutters to let in the light and kept the door open as much as I could. I somehow had gotten over any fear of another attack. A couple of hours passed. I repaired the door, locked it, and went down to the spring for the water I had started to get before. As I was filling the pail I happened to glance through the trees out across the ice to the eastern shore perhaps a mile away. What I saw made my heart jump—it was Johnny homeward bent, pulling a toboggan.

I hurried up with the water, arranged the fire, and then set out for the shore with my rifle, intending to fire salute in my companion's honor. But when I reached a place in the trees from where I had a good view of the lake, I paused in alarm: Three forms I recognized only too well had come out upon the ice from the shore at Johnny's left, and were evidently planning to intercept him. I ran back to the cabin for more balls and my powder flask, then set out at a brisk

trot to his assistance. I had no doubt he would need me.

As I foresaw, the Indians soon met him and I could not make out anything more except that they were standing around in a little group. When I was possibly half a mile away from them over the ice something happened. I saw Johnny step back suddenly to his sled and make a move as if to snatch up something, his gun probably. The scene then turned into a knot of wrestling, struggling figures, swaying back and forth. I uttered a yell, and hurried faster. Should I be in time?

While I was putting forth every effort to get there and take a hand in the battle, I heard a shot and saw a man fall. The group closed in again. I gave another war-whoop, which for the first time seemed to reach the ears of the struggling men. The contest became fiercer and one man was able to break away with the gun, and I saw him bring it down over the head of someone who fell in a heap. It was Johnny. The two Indians now picked up the fallen man who was evidently their comrade, and hurried to the toboggan, planning, I think, to load him on it and escape to the timber. When I saw Johnny fall I did not slacken my pace, for now I was possessed by a burning

desire for revenge, to kill to make up for him. As the Indians bent over the sled they made a good target and I tried a shot, though the range was long.

A yell greeted my effort and I saw one crumple up by the sled. I stopped to ram another load into my gun, and the surviving desperado took advantage of the pause to head for the shore as fast as he could run. I fired at him, but missed. I now hurried on to Johnny who lay in a pool of blood. I knelt by him and looked him over; he had a bad gash in the side of the head, but he was not dead. I next took a look at the two Indians;—it was a strange working out of events, for they were both the ones we had encountered at the end of the L'Anse trail. The one by the sled was dead—my bullet had done for him; but the other was groaning, with a good deal of life left in him yet. But I left him where he lay.

Chapter Twelve

JOHNNY was not so seriously hurt after all. I loaded him onto the toboggan, and with some tugging managed to get both him and his load to the cabin. There I immediately washed his wound and discovered that it was not a very deep one; his scalp was laid open in a long gash, but I knew that he had a hard skull and I did not fear for the result. He was unconscious when I brought him in; but the water and warmth of the room restored him soon, and he opened his eyes.

"Johnny, old man," I cried in tears, "how are you?"

"O I'm all right, Jim. Did one of the scoundrels give me a crack somewhere?"

"Just a little cut in the head."

"How about the man I shot—is he dead?"

"I left him out there on the ice, but he's alive."

"And the others?"

"One is dead; the other got away into the timber."

Johnny closed his eyes, and I thought he had swooned again or dropped off into a doze. I

fixed his bunk, straightened up things in the cabin, and hung a piece of venison in a kettle over the fire. Then I began to tear up some cloth for bandages. While I was busy in this way Johnny called, "Jim, do me a favor, will you?"

I was at his side in a moment.

"I wish you'd go and bring in that Indian who's out there on the ice. He'll freeze to death if we leave him."

All the pent-up inhumanity in me burst forth like a torrent.

"Let him die! Didn't he try to rob and murder you?"

Something almost like a smile came over the boy's face, as he answered quietly:

"He deserves his fate all right, but, Jim, it's Christmas eve, *la nuit de Noël.* And we can afford to be generous, *n'est-ce pas?*"

I don't know what there was in his words that upset me; I must have been overwrought by the events of the last twenty-four hours, but I turned away my head and burst into tears. Christmas eve—I had got a long way from Christmas eve!

"Don't you worry, Johnny,—I'll go and haul in that villain this minute. You rest easy and sleep if you can. I've got some good broth for you in the kettle."

And so I went out over the ice after that wounded Indian. I found him lying where he had fallen, still groaning and moaning. I got him upon the sled, not very gently maybe, and pulled him ashore and up the slope to the house. Getting him onto my shoulder and into my bunk was another hard job; but I succeeded, though the effort made the wounded man groan with pain. I now set about looking after his hurt and found that he had a bad hole in his shoulder,—a smashed shoulder blade for all I knew. However, I dressed the wound and made him as comfortable as I could. Then I turned my attention to my venison broth. When it was ready I tiptoed over to Johnny's bunk, and found him awake.

"Well, I got the savage," I said, a little crossly.

"Yes, I heard him groan. Is he badly hurt?"

"O no, I guess not. A broken shoulder maybe, but nothing more."

"I'm glad of that. He'll come around all right. An Indian is tough when it comes to wounds like that."

"Never mind him. How are you feeling?"

"I'm thirsty—and hungry, too. Give me a drink of that fine spring water, and then ladle out some broth for me. You can feed me today, but tomorrow I'll feed myself."

While I was feeding Johnny I saw the Indian's dark eyes fixed upon me with a famished look, but he said nothing.

"*Nee-jee,* my friend, will you eat?"

He nodded, and after I had given Johnny all I thought he ought to have, I fed the Indian.

Christmas day came, cold and blustering. I fed my invalids, and with the better light I went to dressing their wounds anew. I washed Johnny's head in warm water, and took a few stitches in his scalp. Probably if I had known more I could have done that bit of surgery the day before. But the boy did not flinch, though my treatment was torment to the raw cut. Next I went at the Indian. I slashed away his sleeve and jacket and applied hot bandages to his shoulder; then I bound him up again with rude splints and made him as easy as possible. He never said a word all the time I was working over him; but he was far from unconscious, and his eyes followed every movement I made, as if he were trying to fathom the mystery of his good treatment.

When my wounded were cared for, I began preparations for the Christmas dinner. And here I missed Johnny, for he had the heaven-born genius of the true cook, which shows out so

plainly in the Frenchman. I stirred up some hasty bread as well as I was able; I hung a piece of venison over the fire to roast; and I boiled some wild rice, putting in a few raisins which had been part of a precious secret store I had brought in from Mackinaw. I got out a little hoard of sugar, too, some coffee, and one or two other dainties, which had been saved for some special occasion like this.

As my dinner approached completion I brought out a package which was my Christmas present to Johnny: a fine pair of moccasins and leggins which I had hired the old squaw down the shore to make, and out of my own kit a woolen shirt, and a bright red silk kerchief and a sash, such as the *voyageurs* and forest-runners like to sport on festive occasions. I put all these things handy, and then got my dinner smoking hot on the table. My bread wasn't much, *pas grand' chose,* as Johnny used to say of his own efforts, but the sum total of the display was appetizing. As I looked around at the bunks I saw Johnny on one elbow looking at the lay-out.

"What do you think of it, partner?"

"It looks good to me, and I'm hungry. Help me down—I want to sit up to the table."

I protested, but he was stubborn and had his

way in the end. I steadied him as he walked to the stool by the table, but he sat down rather limply, I thought.

"How are you coming?" I asked solicitously.

"My head whirls—help me back," he murmured, and so I lifted him back. He lay down weakly and closed his eyes, and with a sinking heart I thought our dinner was at an end. But after a moment he felt better, laughed, and said, "Bring on the grub."

I poured him out some coffee, which he sipped with real enjoyment; then I got him a helping of meat and rice. I had almost forgotten the Indian, but a movement he made recalled him to me. I looked at him, wondering if he was still sleeping. But no; his snaky eyes were following me about.

"Well, warrior, can you eat a bite of white man's fare today?"

His lips pulled away from teeth that were as white and clean as a dog's, and he half smiled as he answered:

"I've not overfed in the last week or so—the smell of that venison is in my nose."

I cut off a generous bit, ladled out some rice for him, and put it on a plate. I was about to hand it to him when I thought of the coffee.

"Hold on! First take a drink of this firewater. *Kee tal-i-ni-man-co, nee-jee,* your health, friend!"

"Firewater—ah!"

His tone was one of great satisfaction, but when I put the cup to his lips he hesitated and tasted gingerly. He smacked his lips slowly, and then downed the whole of it at one draught.

"Only three times before in my whole life have I tasted that."

The dinner was a success after all, judging from the way the guests ate, and any cook will say that is the great test. The proof of the pudding is in the eating. Then I brought out my Christmas gifts for Johnny and laid them in his bunk. And I gave a shirt to the Indian, half explaining my action by saying that I had spoilt his in cutting it off his shoulder.

"Say, you man up there," said Johnny, "what's your name?"

"O-ga-shee."

"Well, O-ga-shee, this is a day when we forget our wrongs and start all over again to be good."

"Nee wee way-be-nan nee-yoe mat-chee man-i-tou—I have thrown myself away against the evil spirit," he replied, as if he were singing his death song.

"Nonsense, you can make good for many things yet. Now, Jim, go and dig in my dunnage bag for my Christmas present to you."

I went to his kit and pulled out a carefully wrapped package.

"Is that it?"

He nodded.

I took off cover after cover till finally the gift lay disclosed before me—as fine a flint-lock pistol as I had ever laid eyes on. The barrel was of polished steel, and the butt of burnished metal inlaid with mother of pearl.

"O Johnny," I cried, "it's a beauty. Where did you get it?"

"There's a note in the barrel. Read it."

I pulled out a little paper, and saw Uncle Sandy's hand-writing upon it.

"Dear Jim:

Christmas greetings from Johnny and me. I wish I knew where this would find you, but in some snug place I am sure. This day comes but once a year. I hope it may be a pleasant one to you in the wilderness. As for the pistol, I believe it is a good one. May it not miss fire if ever it stands between you and harm.

Uncle Sandy."

Take it all in all it was a happy Christmas day —would have been absolutely so, but for a vision that haunted me when my mind dwelt upon the affair of the lake; the thought of the dead Indian out there preyed upon me.

Accordingly, the next day I took the axe and our shovel and started out over the ice, determined to give the body some sort of burial, even if only a rude one. But as I approached the spot I was horrified at what I saw—wolf tracks in all directions! I looked carefully, but not a vestige of the body could I find. Some hungry wolf pack, or outlaws from some pack, had come hunting out from the shore and torn the dead man into a thousand pieces.

Our camp on Lac Désert was a good one, and pretty well protected by the forest from the cold north winds which blew with blizzardy breath from far away Lake Superior. Still, the next few weeks drove the cold into every nook and corner of the cabin, and a roaring fire in Johnny's big fireplace did not make us any too comfortable. And the wood consumption of that capacious throat was enormous; I was kept pretty busy chopping to supply fuel.

By the New Year Johnny was up and around, though I did not let him do more than walk about

and boss the domestic operations. The Indian, too, was making good progress, thanks to his fine constitution. He sat by our fire, ate our grub, smoked our trade tobacco, and meditated. At least, he did not talk much. For the first time in his career, good or bad as it had been, he enjoyed three square meals a day and a good shelter over his head. Johnny and I often wondered what he thought of civilization, anyway.

Someway the weeks slipped away. Johnny's old skull was as good as new, and O-ga-shee's shoulder, though stiff and sore, was practically well. One night as we sat by our fire after the evening's reading was over, the Indian startled us by saying:

"Tomorrow I am going to the forest."

"Don't be in a hurry, O-ga-shee. Wait till you are good and strong."

"I have eaten the food of my white brothers for more than a moon now. It is time for me to depart."

"But where will you go? And what will you do? You'd better return to the wigwams of your people, if you are determined to leave us."

"The wigwams of my people—where are they? I have no kinsfolk. As a child I was brought to the forest country by a Chippewa war party,

which stole me from my own people beyond the Great River. Though I speak no tongue but Chippewa, I am a Sioux. But in reality I am a dog, following my tribe from place to place, and at home nowhere. Tomorrow I go back to the forest."

He relapsed into silence, and Johnny and I talked of other things. After a while O-ga-shee spoke again:

"I came to you bringing nothing. I should like to go away with many things. I am a good hunter, and I know a secret place where fur animals abound. Will you give me credit for food, blanket, axe, traps, and a gun with powder and lead? I will surrender the gun to you when I return in a few weeks with my furs."

"Well, Johnny, what do you think of that!" I cried in English, so that the man would not understand. "Here we take in a man who has tried to rob and murder us, make him well again, and he calmly asks us to outfit him for the woods, as if it were a matter of course."

"Jim, it does look strange, I admit. But an Indian is not quite like you or me, and he doesn't tell all that is in his heart. I suspect that he wants to turn his peltries over to us to pay in a measure for his stay here."

"Well, it isn't much of a risk, anyway, and the last few weeks have been full of risks. One more won't matter much. We'll do as he asks."

I turned to the Indian.

"O-ga-shee, when you get ready to go, you shall have whatever outfit you require. But be in no hurry, the weather is still unsettled."

He said nothing further, but the next day announced his intention to depart. Accordingly Johnny and I made up a pack for him, and he got a toboggan ready. We gave him lyed corn, flour, grease, a quantity of frozen fish, and various things he mentioned among his needs. I went so far even as to include some tobacco, and a bit of tea. He insisted that I should estimate the value of the goods in skins, which I did. He would know then what his catch of peltry must cover, he explained.

Just as he was ready to leave, he very solemnly pulled out his medicine bag which he wore on a cord around his neck under his shirt; then he deliberately took out the various pieces of "medicine" till he came to two objects which he seemed to regard with special interest.

"This," he said, handing me a large shiny, pearl-like thing, "this I took from a fallen enemy once on the warpath. But it is bad medicine. I

have no further use for it. This, however, came from an island in Lake Superior, and is a lucky stone. I have carried it with me in cold, hunger, on the hunt, and on the warpath for many years. You shall take them both. They are my gifts to you."

I confess that I was greatly embarrassed. I did not want his "medicine," but at the same time I did not wish to appear indifferent in the matter, for he was in dead earnest.

"Kee-kah-me-shin-nah? Do you really want to give them to me?"

"O-tau-pe-nun: keen-ke-ti-eme. Take them—they belong to thee."

I took the little gifts, wrapped them carefully in a piece of soft cloth, and put them among the personal things of my kit.

When he was ready Johnny and I helped him pack his outfit on the toboggan. Then, putting on the snowshoes which he had made in the last week or so of his stay with us, he took his load and disappeared in the forest without a sign of farewell. We stood looking after him for some time, and then Johnny remarked:

"He's a queer customer. Nobody knows whether we shall ever see him again or not."

And I felt the same way, too.

It was the sixth of February when O-ga-shee left for his trapping grounds. Winter was now at its height, and it was difficult for us to get very far away from the cabin. I went out on snowshoes a few times, but the deer were too well hidden in the depths of the dense timber for me to find them. We were driven, therefore, to fall back on our own supplies, which, luckily, were sufficient.

Ta-ga-we-nin-ne came breezing in late in the afternoon on the eighteenth of February. He was on snowshoes, and brought quite a pack of furs which he exhibited with much pleasure. He was particularly proud of several beaver pelts, which he said were part of the catch at the famous pond they visited. He and the Sturgeon had camped there for a time on the way back to their camp at the close of our expedition against Red Beard; and as we sat by the roaring fire that night after one of Johnny's suppers, he told us all about it.

The Indian stayed over a couple of days, and was good enough to go out and get a deer for us. He had a nose for game, and could go straight to its haunts, as he had proved to us on more than one occasion. Before he returned we told him of all the exciting events of our Christmas week,

and how we had had O-ga-shee to board for more than a month. He became very thoughtful as he listened, but made no comment. Either he did not want to tell us that we would have our trouble for our pains, or he had a little fellow feeling for the savage. We did not urge him to express himself.

Winter lasted without a break until the middle of March. Then suddenly the soft winds began to blow, and the warm sun to take hold of the snow and ice. By the end of the month the earth was nearly bare again, and our lake had become a mushy, honey-combed expanse. There was water everywhere,—spring was at hand.

Chapter Thirteen

AFFAIRS at our little post began to wind up with the approach of spring. All through the month of April debtors were coming in to settle their credits, and we beheld with much satisfaction our pile of furs accumulating. We were doing a good business in spite of all our drawbacks.

Toward the end of April Mex-i-nin-ne and his villagers arrived from their winter camps and brought us still more furs; and on the twenty-ninth Ta-ga-we-nin-ne and Nah-ma turned up with two big packs. They had had a good winter's trapping, and plenty to eat and wear. It was like having with us old friends, comrades even, to see them again, and we spent the best part of the night after their arrival talking over the winter's experiences.

The Indians were anxious to learn what our plans were for quitting the country—whether we should go back to Lake Superior to meet Mr. Kay and his brigade, or return by way of Green Bay. If we were going back to the mouth of the On-to-nog-on, they wanted to assist us, getting

out their own stuff at the same time. Otherwise, they would make a canoe where their camp was and return by the west branch of the river which headed near them.

This brought us face to face with the question which we had discussed between ourselves all winter, but had not yet settled definitely. Mex-i-nin-ne had told us that it was quite possible for us to reach Green Bay by the Brulé and Me-nom-i-nee Rivers—that such, in fact, was a regular route from the Ka-ta-kit-te-kon country to Mackinaw. He had made it himself more than once. The only hardship about it was the long carry of fifteen miles to Lake Brulé where canoe navigation began. We referred the matter to Ta-ga-we-nin-ne, who had been almost everywhere through the wilderness at some time or other. What did he think of it?

He smoked for sometime in silence, then declared it was a good way for us, only we should need men. If we went back to Lake Superior he and Nah-ma could help us. It would be an easy trip with high water, and at the mouth of the On-to-nog-on we could join ourselves to the brigade. Could we get men for the other route?

We were able to answer that question satisfactorily, for Mex-i-nin-ne had reassured us on

this point. He had a man or two who would be glad to help us through to Mackinaw if we so desired. He had also agreed to assist us in getting a canoe at Lake Brulé or, if necessary, some of his people there would make a new one for us.

"In that case you have a good route either way. You will take the one you prefer; one you know already—it is old. The other is new and shorter. Choose between them."

Johnny and I talked it over by ourselves and decided for Green Bay. The fact that it was a new route to us, and that we might have to be our own brigade the whole distance, settled the matter. We were still hankering for adventures. And so that was our report to our two Indian friends, who in some disappointment, I think, took leave of us and headed homewards, bearing a letter from us to Mr. Kay, in case he passed after their arrival on Lake Superior. We had goods enough left, however, so that we could afford to be generous with them for old times' sake. They were faithful men, the sort that could be counted on in a hard place, and such are not over plentiful among white men or red. We said good-bye to them with real regret.

We set the tenth of May for our departure and began to get our outfit together. We had

now ten bales of furs, and most of the outstanding credits had been settled. We had two bales of goods yet on hand, and the following provisions: two fawnskins of rice; one bag of lyed corn; one keg of prepared tallow; and miscellaneous small quantities of tea, salt, flour, and maple sugar. The last article had come in since the spring began. We needed venison, but hoped to obtain some by barter or hunting on our way down stream. We would take our fish net with us also—that ought to help us out almost any time.

We had seen or heard nothing of O-ga-shee, but I had long since given him up as a bad bargain. Johnny still had faith in him, but it had begun to waver when May came with no sign of him. And then on the fourth of the month he arrived.

It was toward the close of the day that he came staggering under a heavy pack through the trees to the cabin. I was coming up from the spring with a bucket of water when I caught sight of him. At first I did not know him, he had changed so. He was gaunt and hollow-eyed, and his clothes hung on him in rags. He went straight to our door and dropped his burden. Then he straightened up and drew a deep breath, at the

same time stretching his arms like one who is trying to relax strained and tired muscles.

Johnny greeted him with a yell and slapped him on the back. I came up and, I hope, showed my delight in a friendly way. It was not the pack of furs he had promised us that counted, it was his keeping his word like a man. And here he was, more dead than alive, but true to his agreement. We did not ask him any questions, but set a good, hearty meal before him, trusting that he would talk when he felt like it. And that night he related his experiences.

To reach his trapping ground had taken him three days instead of two, as he had planned. He found that his strength was not as great as he had hoped, and he was pretty well exhausted at the end. His shoulder became stiff and sore again, and he was hardly able to build a wigwam. He had to rest up for a week before he could go to work on his trap line.

His luck with his traps was good, as we could see, but his supply of food had not lasted, and during the last few weeks he had been on half allowance. All this had pulled him down so that for ten days in April he had lain sick in his bark shelter, with hardly strength enough to keep up his fire. Warmer weather had restored him, how-

ever, and brought him game, and here he was back again, as he had promised. Only one fear had troubled him the whole time, and that was that we might leave before he could reach us with his furs.

O-ga-shee would eat of our fare, and sit by our fire, but he would not sleep in our cabin any more, preferring for some reason to camp in the open near-by. The next day he came to us with a proposal to accompany us to Mackinaw as canoe-man; he knew the way, and would go for his food and outfit.

"It does not matter where I go; I am no tribe's man, and no wigwam waits for me anywhere. Take me to Mackinaw—I will serve you fairly."

Johnny thought well of the idea, and I was not unwilling, either. Only we must get the man into some sort of physical condition before the trip began. It was fortunate that we had almost a week for it.

"O-ga-shee, we'll take you with us and treat you well. But we want you to get some flesh on your bones. Eat well, sleep much, and rest. We'll soon be on the trail for Mi-chil-li-mack-i-naw."

In response to our words we saw for the first time a gleam of something like delight on the man's face.

We left our camp, according to program, on the tenth of May. Mex-i-nin-ne sent a man over to our shore with a canoe to transport us and our stuff to the other end of the lake where the trail to Lac Brulé began. We carried our bales of furs, well packed and wrapped in canvas, and our remaining pieces of merchandise and provisions, and camp outfit, down to the water's edge. Johnny and I then went back and took a farewell look around the cabin to see if we had forgotten anything. All was in order; the chimney was covered, the windows were battened fast; we closed the door and locked it. Then I put up a sign:

SANDY MACDONALD'S
POST

and we turned our backs on the snug little camp at Lac Désert. A couple of hours later we were across the lake ready to start on the long portage.

Here we found five of Mex-i-nin-ne's men waiting to help us, and we set to work at once. Our load made seventeen pieces all told, and no canoe. That we were to find at Lake Brulé. Counting Johnny and me, there were seven of us

to do the packing; O-ga-shee was to carry for the first few days only light stuff and so spare himself as much as possible.

The first day we covered about two and a half miles through a low swampy country, and I never worked harder. I was so tired when the day's work was done that I did not care whether I ate anything or not, and there was no rest for me in my blanket. It was the first day on the On-to-nog-on trail all over again. But keeping at it made me fit again, now as then; the second day was a little easier than the first, and the third day quite tolerable, indeed. In four days we got our stuff to a creek flowing into Lake Brulé, and the portaging was over. Here we paid off Mex-i-nin-ne's men.

We were disappointed in not finding the canoe waiting for us; so leaving O-ga-shee in camp with the stuff, Johnny and I went on to the Indian village to investigate. It was a walk of some two miles through the forest to the lake shore, but we found the place without difficulty. The Indians had not been back long from their winter trapping, and the settlement was the usual confusion of dogs, squaws, and children. Some of the men were at work by the beach on their fishing tackle, and two or three others were putting the finish-

ing touches to a canoe which, they said, had been built for us.

True to the agreement, the canoe was delivered to our camp on the creek the next day, and settled for with goods to the value of twenty-five skins. Everything was now ready for our long trip to Mackinaw, a trip that Johnny and I looked forward to with eagerness. There might be hardships and adventures ahead of us; but we would bear them heroically, for we were going home.

It was early on the fifteenth of May when we pushed out from our camping place on the little creek and down stream toward Lake Brulé. O-ga-shee was in the bow, Johnny was again steersman, and I paddled from amidships.

At the first camp down from the outlet of Lake Brulé we picked up a recruit to our force. We had turned in at a place which was a regular halting spot, judging from the signs around; and as we hauled our canoe ashore we saw that some party had been there not very long before, for the remains of a campfire were hardly cold. We proceeded to get up our tent, start a fire and make preparations for supper; we were hungry and anxious to try our teeth on some good fried fish. As we were squatting by the fire eating and talking, Johnny suddenly cried:

"Why, see our caller!"

O-ga-shee and I looked around, and there, crawling and cringing and wagging his tail, came the sorriest specimen of a dog I ever beheld. It was a little dog, starved almost to a skeleton; one ear stood up jauntily, the other was split and lopped in a funny way over one eye. We called to him and the poor little beast came cowering up, scared and uncertain of us, but powerfully attracted by the smell of food. We petted him a little, and fed him. It was fairly pathetic to see him eat. And then when he could not hold any more he went and curled up by O-ga-shee, as if he knew an Indian from a white man. When we spoke about it O-ga-shee said:

"There is a bond between him and me: we are both outcasts and homeless."

When we broke camp the next morning the little dog hung around and whined. He was afraid he was going to be left behind again. As the last pack was in place and we were about to take our places and push off, O-ga-shee asked with some embarrassment if he might take Anne-moose, the dog, along, adding that he did not weigh much any way, and on the portages he could take care of himself. We were glad enough to assent, for the little fellow was intelligent,

even if his looks belied him, and it was fun to have him along. Johnny and I were still boys enough to like a dog.

It took us three days and a half to reach the mouth of the Mi-chi-gam-me, one of the large eastern tributaries of the Me-nom-i-nee. The water was high and our progress was good. Whatever portages we made were short ones around some log-jam or a bit of rough water, interruptions which added zest to our day's work. It seemed good to be in the canoe again and gliding along through a changing picture of forest scenes.

We could not get the Indian to talk any of his past life, though from little remarks he dropped here and there we saw that he must have traveled our waterway frequently. But whether on war parties or more peaceful voyages, he did not say. We did not pretend to understand him, and while he was a faithful, efficient helper, he was moody and taciturn. Often when the night camp was made and supper eaten, instead of resting by the cozy fire and smoking, he would go to some neighboring rock or point overlooking the river and sit alone till far into the night. The little dog was his inseparable companion, eating out of his dish, sitting by him in the canoe, sleeping in his blan-

ket at night, but he was never allowed to accompany him in these night vigils on the rocks. We could always tell when he had returned and was asleep in his blanket, for the dog no longer whined and cried.

On the twenty-second of May we struck a stretch of wild, white water which O-ga-shee called *San-ne-gat Pow-we-tink,* the Grand Rapids.

"We shall be in camp tomorrow on the shores of the Big Water," he remarked when we had at last traversed the portage and were afloat once more; "it is not quite a day's paddle now—only the Twin Islands and one more rapids to pass."

Chapter Fourteen

IT WAS on the twenty-third of May when we reached Green Bay and turned northward, and from now on our progress was rapid. But we were worried not a little by O-gashee's strange behavior.

"Johnny," I said one day, "I wonder what the matter is?"

"I've been observing him for days, and he's done several things that make me think his mind is wavering. Only last night he got up in the dark and went off into the forest for an hour or so. And several times lately I have come upon him making medicine with the contents of his medicine bag spread out before him. I don't know what it means, but I don't like it."

"Do you fear any treachery? I've slept with my pistol under my blanket for several nights now."

"I've had an eye open, too. I don't believe he's planning any harm to us, but it would be awkward to have to walk from here to Mackinaw. Still, I hesitate to show in any way that my suspicions are aroused."

On the twenty-eighth we rounded Point Seul Choix. I remember the day well,—one of those balmy, half spring, half summer days which come frequently in the Great Lakes country when the spring is on the wane. We halted rather longer for dinner than usual; we were making such good time now that we were willing to stretch a nooning now and then. The meal was as good as our limited supplies afforded, as good as canoemen have ever had along that shore, but O-ga-shee hardly ate anything, and when he looked at us, or spoke, his gaze seemed to travel through us and beyond us.

"Are you sick, O-ga-shee?" I asked at length. "You don't eat, and dipping the paddle hour after hour ought to make one hungry."

He did not answer at once, but continued to sit staring out over the lake. Finally he spoke.

"I was thinking of Kee-non-jee," he said solemnly, and went about his work.

We were glad the tension was over. So far as we could recollect, that was the first time he had ever alluded to his companion, Kee-non-jee, though we knew that was the man who was with him that day at the end of the L'Anse trail, and again on his visit to our cabin. What the tie was between them we could not surmise, but we felt

it was a strong one. They were evidently brothers of the trail, if not of blood.

We paddled as usual all the afternoon, making camp just before nightfall in a beautiful spot at the foot of a promontory which came boldly into the lake. Before we were done with our evening cooking the moon came up, full and majestic, over the forest and the headland. Johnny and I turned into our blankets early, leaving O-ga-shee still sitting by the fire. I had been asleep some time when Johnny roused me, and I sat up with a start. He was sitting bolt upright, too, with his blanket drawn up around him, and the little dog was whimpering and crying.

"What's the matter?" I asked.

"O-ga-shee hasn't turned in yet, he's up there on the headland. See!"

I looked where he motioned, and could make out the bold outline of the Indian against the moonlight and the sky. He was rocking to and fro, his arms spread out toward the lake, and chanting something in a voice we could not understand. It was enough to make one's blood run cold—the yellow moonlight, the mournful whimpering of the dog, and O-ga-shee's strange, weird song. We listened for a time in silence.

"What shall we do, Johnny?" I whispered, but

before he could answer the figure in bold relief on the promontory had risen and was standing looking toward the sky as if in supplication. My hair actually began to rise on end.

"Hark!" whispered Johnny, and even the dog cowered in silence, awed in some mysterious way. O-ga-shee's voice was shrill now, almost defiant.

"It's a death chant, Jim; you can make out the words."

We watched and listened, spellbound, shivering in our blankets, and then we heard the Indian say, "I am coming, Kee-non-jee," and before our eyes, with hand outspread, as one makes the peace sign to an enemy, he walked out over the edge of the cliff and disappeared. The little dog gave a yelp of terror and bounded off into the night.

"Quick, the canoe," shrieked Johnny, and we threw off our blankets and rushed bareheaded to the shore. It was only the work of a moment to slide the frail shell of a boat into the water, and in three minutes we were under the cliff. "O-ga-shee, O-ga-shee," we called frantically, but not a word, not a sound from the placid water that lapped against the rocks. For an hour we paddled about, watching and calling, but saw nothing, and finally returned heartsick to camp, to spend

the rest of the night in a gruesome vigil by the fire.

When dawn came we paddled up to the promontory again, and this time we found what we were dreading to see, O-ga-shee lying on a shelving bit of beach with his feet in the water. The little dog was crouching by him, as if keeping watch over him. We wondered why we had not found him in the night.

The next days were wet, squally ones, and, short-handed as we were, and with the bad weather, we did not get along very fast. One whole twenty-four hours we lay windbound in camp in a cove, not daring to venture out. But if our progress was slow, it was progress nevertheless, and with every day's work we came closer to Mackinaw and home.

On the fifth of June, we came in sight of Point aux Chênes, where we had both been before. Johnny gave a war-whoop and pointed with his paddle.

"Do you recognize the place, Jim? We are not more than a day's distance now from Mackinaw."

That afternoon Johnny remarked that we were in for a bad storm, and when we went into camp at night the sky in the west was beginning to look

threatening, and the wind was already stirring up rough water ahead. We were wise enough *voyageurs* to make things snug. Our furs were carried up high and dry on the shore and carefully covered with a tarpaulin which we weighted down with rocks; the canoe was turned bottom up nearby, and lashed securely. For some time now the nights had been so fine that we had not taken the trouble to put up our tent, preferring to roll up in our blankets with our feet to the fire. We had no trouble about sleeping; our day's work was hard enough usually to make any bed a good one to us. But this night we staked out the tent and spread our blankets under it. We were not running any chances with Johnny's weather signs.

We did not turn in immediately after supper, but lay by the fire and talked. It looked sure enough as if bad weather was at hand. Our tent and stuff were sheltered from the wind by a dense growth of trees that came almost to the shore, but we could now tell from the way the waves came rolling in that a gale was sweeping over upper Lake Michigan somewhere. In a little while we heard the growl of thunder; and big rain drops were spattering down on the canvas over our heads when at last we turned into our tent and rolled up in our blankets.

I don't know how long I had been asleep, but I was suddenly awakened by a downpour, which was torrential, and constant flashes of lightning. And then, almost before I had time to sense the situation, there came a shriek of the blast and our tent was ripped away from over our heads and carried off into the night. Johnny was sound asleep, I think, when the gust came, and it must have been a rude awakening for him, for the rain was like a deluge. I tried to get upon my feet, but tripped in my blanket and fell on Johnny, who was spluttering and scolding. An-ne-moose, the little dog, whimpered as if he thought the end of the world had come.

"Let's get under the canoe," I yelled, and groped my way as best I could toward where I thought the canoe was. But if it had not been for the lightning, I should never have found it. It was lucky that we had taken such pains to secure the bales and the canoe, for everything loose was blowing away, and one blast under our frail craft would have dashed it into the timber. Finally I got to the canoe and tried to crawl under, the dog crowding ahead of me. But just then and there I got the surprise of my life, for the dog gave a yelp and came out as if shot from a gun, and behind him for encouragement were

yowls, screetches, and snarls, fit to make one's flesh creep.

"What in thunder is under there?" bawled Johnny almost in my ear, as a flash of lightning showed him my whereabouts. "It must be a wild cat or a panther."

Now, I had never seen a panther, but had heard from forest-runners and trappers all sorts of yarns about them, and particularly that their cries at night in the depths of the woods were blood-curdling and awful. So far, the description seemed to agree with those terrible sounds which the dog and I had provoked under the canoe. We fell away from the spot as from a pestilence, and all the time the rain beat upon us, and the wind and the lightning made the night hideous.

In some way we managed to find our be-draggled blankets, and, wrapping them around us, though they were as wet as water, we huddled together under the lee of a big tree that towered skyward some rods away. We were certainly a disconsolate pair out there in the tempest.

"I wish daylight would come," said Johnny, "I'd like to try a shot at that beast, whatever it is."

"This is fine weather for powder, Johnny," I answered with rattling teeth. "We'll be mighty

lucky if we can start a fire, to say nothing of finding any dry powder. You don't suppose that thing'll come out after us, do you?"

"The dog'll tell us if he stirs. We'll keep our knives handy for him, anyway."

But nothing happened to us. Finally a lull came in the storm, and after a while it ceased altogether. At last came daylight, and Johnny did not lose any time in getting hold of his rifle. Then he carefully drew out the load and put in another with some powder from his flask, which he said was dry. While he was doing this I managed to get a fire started. All this time the dog had kept as far away from the canoe as he could, following Johnny or me every step we took. What he remembered of the night evidently made him desire the companionship of human beings.

"Get a big firebrand, Jim, and let's go after the creature. I've gently cut the lashings of the canoe, and when I say Ready! you tip her over."

We approached the canoe stealthily. Johnny took up his position with rifle cocked and I, shifting my flaming firebrand to one hand, seized the canoe with the other and turned it over. An-ne-moose, the pup, gave an uncanny howl, but it was only because his nerves were on edge, for there

was absolutely nothing there. Johnny looked at me and I at him; then we both laughed sheepishly and went about our day's work. Whatever the thing was, animal or goblin, it had not thought best to wait till daylight for identification.

It took twenty-four hours for the waves to go down before we could venture on in the canoe. But we did not begrudge the time, for it gave us an opportunity to dry out our camp stuff and our clothes. We also spent two or three hours looking for the tent, but it had either lodged in some tree-top out of sight or had been blown off the earth; we could not find it.

The morning of the seventh of June dawned sunny and quiet; and while the sea had not subsided entirely, we thought it prudent to set out. It required a lot of hard work to get our canoe loaded and afloat unharmed, but at last we were on our way again. Before noon we doubled Point LaBarbe, not far from St. Ignace, and caught our first sight of Mackinaw looming up like a magic island straight ahead of us. No wonder the Indians called it the Island of the Fairies. It was a two hours' paddle, but we voted to let dinner go, knowing that the one we would get at night would make up for it. The swells were running pretty large in the five or six miles of open strait,

The Present Village of Mackinaw

but we steered boldly out and on. In two hours we were across. Our course took us to the north end of the island, and then we coasted southward along the high, steep bluff till we came to the little flat shelf of shore where nestled Mackinaw, the village. How beautiful the little white cabins and the spire of the church looked to us that day!

Johnny had something of the dandy about him, and that morning before leaving our camp, he had arrayed himself like a village beau, in new moccasins and leggins, new buckskin shirt, and gaudy kerchief and sash, things he had been saving for months for this very event. He even went so far as to fasten to his left knee a garter of hawksbells, which jingled and tinkled with every move he made. He proposed to return like a real *voyageur*.

We slipped around the point as quietly as we could, and headed for Uncle Sandy's wharf. But a few shore loungers had already caught sight of us and were at the landing to meet us with yells and hurrahs, not so much because it was we, as because that was the way they acted whenever a canoe or a brigade arrived from the wilderness. It made a diversion for them, and gave them new topics of conversation. They helped us to land, asked about our winter's business, and gave us

morsels of village gossip. But I was in no mood to tarry long after the first *bonjours* were over. Leaving Johnny on the wharf to display himself in his finery and watch the cargo, I hurried up to the warehouse to make my first report as *bourgeois* of a winter's trading. Uncle Sandy, who had been aroused by the jubilation, met me at the door.

I went into the old store and building I knew so well, and then followed Uncle Sandy across into his private room. When the door closed behind us he stopped, and taking me by the shoulders looked at me hard and long, as if he was trying to read in my face the story of every day's experience of the whole long winter.

"James, my boy, how does it seem to be Sandy MacDonald's man? The time has not been short with you away, and not a word from you, not a word!"

And then we talked and talked, till at last I recollected that I had left Johnny waiting on the wharf. I sent some men down to bring up the pieces of fur, the merchandise, and the camp stuff, and to request Johnny to come up, too. Uncle Sandy was eager to greet the one who, I was proud to say, had done more than I to make the expedition a success. He came in smiling as ever,

with An-ne-moose at his heels, looking in all his finery not any the worse for wear, and Uncle Sandy welcomed him with outstretched hand.

"Johnny, James here has been telling me that you have been a loyal, devoted friend and valuable man from start to finish of the trip. I am proud of you and tomorrow I shall show my gratitude in some more evident way. You are a true son of your father who has been a faithful *voyageur* to me for many years. *Au revoir demain*—good-bye until tomorrow."

After Johnny left us we sat and talked again, and I was astonished to learn that Uncle Sandy himself had been over that same On-to-nog-on trail to Lac Désert and beyond, not once, but many times. When I described our campaign against Red Beard, he was suddenly all attention and approbation.

"I would not have sent you two boys into that wilderness if I had dreamt that Red MacKinnon with his lame leg and evil soul was still in that part of the world. I thought the Company had transferred him farther west. He's been the scourge of the forest since before you and Johnny were born. Once or twice he and I have met, and he will never forget it—not, anyway, till his short leg grows long again. He got that in a fray when

his gang and mine clashed one day at the Long Portage beyond Fond du Lac. You gave him his deserts that night; only I'm not so sure your Indian wasn't right—it might have been well to have left him in the burning building."

"Why, Uncle," I said aghast, " I could not do that."

Uncle Sandy laughed till the beams overhead resounded.

"O no, of course not,—that was a joke. But I have no love for Red MacKinnon. However, honors are all on our side now. Those two Indians of yours—what do you call them, Ta-ga-we-nin-ne and Nah-ma—I must reward handsomely. They gave square and honest service. But tell me about O-ga-shee.

I had only hinted at the unhappy episode before, but now I described it in detail from the beginning. When I spoke of the gifts O-ga-shee made me as he left for his winter trapping, Uncle Sandy asked to see them. I gave them to him. The pebble he recognized as a "green stone" from Isle Royale in Lake Superior, and remarked that the Indians found them nowhere else. The other object he studied long and attentively. Then he got a reading glass and examined it again. Then he looked at me quizzically.

"What's the matter, Uncle? Did he palm off on me some trader's bauble?"

"James, unless I'm mistaken this shiny thing here is worth a thousand dollars."

"A thousand dollars—why, what is it?"

"A pearl, and a rare one, at that."

I was astounded. I had heard of pearls, though I had never seen one. I had always thought of them as jewels of queens and oriental princesses, and did not dream that they were ever the product of the wilderness. No wonder I was too amazed for speech.

"Yes, O-ga-shee has given you a king's ransom, or I'm no MacDonald any longer."

"If it's a pearl and as valuable as you say, it ought to go to Johnny rather than me, for he was the one who really saved his life, you know. I brought him from the ice that day only because Johnny urged me to."

"Oh, we'll fix that all right! I have an idea which I will disclose later. Now let's take a look at your furs. That will tell the story really as to whether you are a heaven-born trader or not. Many a big pack holds poor furs.

This way of putting it made me a little nervous, for, after all, I was not so sure that the Indians had not imposed upon me. I would guarantee the

furs that Ta-ga-we-nin-ne and Nah-ma brought us, but the others might have taken advantage of me somewhere. Most probably they had. We went out into the storeroom where the men had dumped the bales as they brought them up from the canoe—someway, it seemed a pretty small cargo to bring home from the fur country, and I suspected Uncle Sandy thought so too.

I began to rip open the pieces and one of the clerks sorted the furs. Uncle Sandy took a chair and checked off the peltries as they were laid out, —the beaver, mink, marten, fisher, otter, musk-rat, raccoon, lynx, fox, wolf, bear, and deer skins. He said nothing, but I knew he was noting the value as it appealed to him. Finally the job was done and the whole ten bales were appraised. My spirits had risen a little when I saw the furs spread out once more, the Indians had not fooled me altogether. But Uncle Sandy did not say anything, just folded up his paper and retired to his private room, and I went out to stretch my legs in the village.

The next day Uncle Sandy celebrated our return in great style. The big bake-oven by the side of the living quarters was heated up at daylight, with his French cook in supreme command. Bread, baked beans, roast ham, and cake—such

the things with which he planned to tempt our unspoiled forest appetites. I thought, maybe, some of the other clerks would sit at the table with us, but not so—it was a dinner for us, and in our honor. And a formal one, too, for Uncle Sandy wore his broadcloth coat, his plum colored waistcoat, a frilled shirt and choker, knee breeches, and silver-buckled shoes. Only once before had I ever seen him in such splendor, and that was when he entertained Governor Cass at dinner on the occasion of his last visit to Mackinaw.

Truth to tell, I was not any too comfortable, myself, in such state, but Johnny was almost too bashful to eat. If we could have had a banquet like this back in the wilderness we should have done justice to it; but here, with that shrewd old Scotchman, Sandy MacDonald, "Tough Beast," a trader who dared to defy the great, unscrupulous Company, sitting at the head of the table, it was different. However, we got through the meal. Then the dishes were cleared away and we had raisins and nuts for dessert, and at last Uncle Sandy became jovial. Finally he spoke:

"Boys, you have more than met my expectations on this trip of yours. I have rarely seen handsomer furs, and better bought, than these

you came in with. If my other parties do as well, I shall have a good profit to chalk up against the winter's business. But in all this fur trading it's the men who make the profit for me, and I play fair by my men. Johnny, your wages, as I arranged with your father, were to be two hundred dollars the year, and found. I'll double that; you have more than earned it. Another thing. That medicine trinket which O-ga-shee gave James in your camp at Lac Désert is a pearl of large value, I am convinced. We shall find out what it is worth and half its price is yours. You have earned that, too."

I looked slyly at Johnny, but he was blushing like a school girl, too embarrassed for words. But my turn was coming.

"I had a purpose in sending you boys off into the wilderness. It was a hard test, but a good one after all. James, as I explained to you a year ago, you are the last of my kith and kin, and I am settling now on who shall take up my business when I am gone. Oh, I don't plan on going soon, but I mean to be so forehanded that Death, or the American Fur Company, won't gain too much when I take to the long trail. What I have built up I want to last a while longer. But a truce to further talk, James; from this day on you are

a member of the firm, a partner in the business. And some day, not too soon, please God, you shall be my heir and successor.

I was overwhelmed with emotion and could make no reply. But not so Johnny. He had recovered his wits, and now fell to slapping me on the back and shouting in great glee: "Hurrah for Sandy MacDonald! And hurrah for Jim MacDonald, Sandy MacDonald's man!"

Glossary of Words and Phrases

Bateau, French, pronounced "bat-tow," a flat-bottomed boat usually, for the transportation of freight and heavy baggage. Plural, *bateaux.*

Bonjour, French, "bon-jhoor," "Good morning, How do you do," etc.

Bo-shoo, A word made by the Indians from the French *Bonjour,* meaning, "How do you do"?

Bourgeois, "boorjhe-wah," special representative or agent of the owner, who accompanied a brigade of canoes.

Cache, French, "cash"; a place where extra supplies were hidden or stored.

Calumet, French, pronounced "Cal-u-meh"; Indian pipe, usually of the red, so-called pipe-stone; also the pipe dance.

Canot du nord, French, "cano du nor," Northland canoe, a freight canoe.

Carcajou, pronounced as spelled; Canadian Indian for the animal known as the wolverene. Michigan is the Wolverene State.

Carrot, a bunch of tobacco rolled into a carrot-shaped twist.

Carry, portage, a place on a stream where canoes were carried around rapids, or a long stretch overland between navigable waters.

Cordelle, pronounced as spelled; tow-ropes or lines for pulling or "tracking" canoes and *bateaux.*

Coureur de bois, "koo-rur de bwah," French, meaning "forest runner," "ranger," "woodsman."

Diable boiteux, "dee-abl' bwah-teu," French for "lame devil."

Dunnage, baggage, camp equipment.

Factor, a man in charge of a trading post, representing the owner.

Forest runner, a translation of the French *coureur de bois,* "scout," "hunter," "woodsman."

Gun-worm, a screw-like device on the end of a ramrod with which the load of the gun may be drawn out.

Hawksbell, a little bell like a sleigh bell, with a ball inside to make it tinkle.

Ka-ta-kit-te-kon, Indian name of Lac Vieux Désert.

Lac Brulé, "Bree-lay," taken from the French; means Burnt Lake.

Lac Flambeau, "Flam-bo," literally, "Torch Lake."

League, a French measure of distance, about three miles.

Long Knives, what the Indians originally called the English, from the fact that the soldiers wore swords.

Mah-ki-nonge, Indian for the muskellunge, a name which seems to have been made out of the Indian word; a big pike.

Maintenant, "man-te-nah," French for "now."

Mangeur de lard, "man-jheur de lar," literally "bacon eater," a name given in derision to the greenhorns who felt themselves above the rude fare of fat and hominy.

Marche, "marsh," French, meaning "Go! Beat it!"

Medicine, objects of sacred or religious meaning. Such charms were usually carried in a bag.

Moccasin, Indian shoe made of soft deerskin.

Mo-cock, Indian basket in which food was stored, or carried.

Piece, a bale of goods, baggage, or a pack of furs. Our word is from the French word, pronounced "pe-ess."

Pipe, the distance a canoeman paddled before resting for a smoke. The word in French is pronounced "peep."

Plus, French, pronounced about as in English. A wilderness standard of value, reckoned originally at one beaver skin, or its value.

Portage, taken into English from the French *portage,* "por-tajhe." For meaning, see *Carry.*

Pose, French, pronounced as in English; a halting place, or stop, on the trail where carriers put down their packs.

Prime Peltries, furs taken at the proper time, well stretched, and in good condition.

Sacré, French, "sah-cray," a rather strong swear word.

Steel, a steel rod with which to strike a spark on flint to kindle fires.

Tomahawk, Indian hatchet or axe, much used in battle.

Track, verb meaning to pull, or tow.

Traverse, as a noun, a crossing; for example, a *traverse* of a lake.

Totem Mark; Every Indian was a member of a tribe, or clan, which had some animal for its special sign or badge.

Tumpline, a leather strap worn over the forehead by which the trappers carried their packs.

Twisted Wood, a translation of the Indian name of the bitter sweet.

Vermilion, a red paint with which the Indian streaked his face.

Voyageur, "vwah-a-jheur," a boatman, one who accompanied a fur brigade as a paddler.

Vive la Guerre, "veev lah gair," French for, "Hurrah for war"!

Wa-tap, long, string-like spruce roots which, when boiled and split, make excellent cords and ropes; an Indian word.

Withes, binding material of bark or *wa-tap.*

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Ford
Sandy MacDonald's man.

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